

SILVIO E. PETRICCIANI: THE EVOLUTION OF GAMING IN NEVADA THE TWENTIES TO THE EIGHTIES

Interviewee: Silvio Petricciani

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Description

Silvio Petricciani was born in Reno on December 1, 1917. His parents, John and Julia Petricciani, had emigrated to northern California from Livorgno, Italy, and then to Reno. Soon after their arrival, John purchased the Palace Club building on the corner of Commercial Row and Center Street, and obtained a half interest in the company that furnished slot machines for the surreptitious gambling establishments in the Reno-Lake Tahoe area. As the son of the "Slot Machine King of Reno," Silvio Petricciani was introduced at an early age to the world of Nevada gambling. His own, nearly lifelong, activities in gaming began during his high school years as he assisted his father in maintaining and repairing slot machines. When casino gambling was legalized in Nevada in 1931, John Petricciani added games to the Palace Club operation, and after graduating from high school in 1934, Silvio began to work with his father in the club, learning every facet of the business.

World War II interrupted the operation of the Palace Club. John was not well, so the club was leased to others when Silvio was drafted into the army in 1943. Silvio Petricciani involved himself in other activities until the lease expired, working in other Reno establishments before moving to Las Vegas in 1948. During the next sixteen years, Petricciani was associated with four Las Vegas casinos: the El Dorado, the El Rancho, the Fremont, and the Stardust.

In 1964, Silvio Petricciani returned to Reno to resume active management of the Palace Club. Under his guidance, the club was remodeled and developed into one of Reno's most popular small casinos, noted for its courteous and helpful personnel and its excellent and inexpensive restaurant. When the Summa Corporation purchased the Palace Club in 1979, Reno lost one of its oldest gaming landmarks.

Mr. Petricciani also gives recollections of his childhood and youth in Reno, of gambling in Nevada from the 1920s to the 1970s, and of his love of aviation and many experiences as a pilot. There are also notes on the Petricciani family, and on his many civic and charitable contributions.

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An Oral History Conducted by Kathryn M. Totton

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

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In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

INTRODUCTION

Silvio Petricciani is a native Nevadan, born in Reno on December 1, 1917. His parents, John and Julia Petricciani, had emigrated to northern California from Livorgno, Italy, and thence, after a few years, to Reno. Soon after their arrival, John purchased the Palace Club building on the corner of Commercial Row and Center Street, and obtained a half interest in the company that furnished slot machines for the surreptitious gambling establishments in the Reno-Lake Tahoe area. As the son of the “Slot Machine King of Reno,” Silvio Petricciani was introduced at an early age to the world of Nevada gambling. His own, nearly lifelong, activities in the gaming profession began during his high school years as he assisted his father in maintaining and repairing slot machines. When casino gambling was legalized in Nevada in 1931, John Petricciani added games to the Palace Club operation, and after graduating from high school in 1934, Silvio began to work with his father in the club, learning every facet of the business.

World War II interrupted Petricciani’s career and the Petricciani family’s operation of the Palace Club. John Petricciani was not well, so the club was leased to others when his son was drafted into the United States Army in 1943. Since the lease had not expired when Petricciani returned from Europe two years later, he involved himself in other activities, working in various Reno area establishments before moving to Las Vegas in 1948. During the subsequent sixteen years, Petricciani was associated with four of Las Vegas’ major casinos: the El Dorado, the El Rancho, the Fremont, and the Stardust.

In 1964, Silvio Petricciani returned to Reno to resume active management of the Palace Club. Under his guidance, the club was remodeled and developed into one of Reno’s most popular small casinos, noted for its courteous and helpful personnel and its excellent and inexpensive restaurant. When Summa Corporation purchased the Palace Club in 1979, Reno lost one of its oldest landmarks in the downtown casino area.

When invited to participate in the Oral History Program, Silvio Petricciani accepted graciously. He was a generous, co-operative, and enthusiastic chronicler of his life through fourteen recording sessions, all held in his office in the Palace Club from October, 1977, through June, 1978. Mr. Petricciani's careful review of the script resulted in only minor corrections of spellings and dates. The oral history contains Petricciani's recollections of his childhood and youth in Reno, of gambling as it existed in the Reno area in the 1920s, and of his own experience of more than forty years in the gaming industry, both in Reno and in Las Vegas. The oral history also indicates Petricciani's love of aviation and includes a discussion of his many experiences as a pilot. Notes on the Petricciani family, and on his many civic and charitable contributions precede the philosophical conclusion which completes the volume.

The Oral History Program of the University of Nevada-Reno Library records the past and present for future research by taping the reminiscences of people who have been important witnesses to the development of Nevada and the West. The resulting transcripts are deposited in the Special Collections departments of the University Libraries at Reno and Las Vegas, where they are available for research. Silvio Petricciani has generously donated the literary rights in his memoir to the University of Nevada, and has designated the volume as open for research.

Kathryn M. Totton
University of Nevada-Reno
1982

BACKGROUND, EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Now, you asked me about the background of my parents and their activities. Julia, my mother, and John, my father, were both born in Italy near a town called Leghorn, which is also known in Italian as Livorno. They were born inland from the sea about oh, maybe ten, fifteen miles—it's also near Masa Carrara, which is the place where all the beautiful Italian marble is mined. John, my father, grew up in a typical Italian family. They were landowners, and they had outlying little fields that people worked and so on. They also had their own land that they worked—you might call them sharecroppers—and they contributed to whatever was grown, and they paid a rental for the land, and when they sold the crops, why they paid their rental, and whatever they made over, that's what they kept.

Dad grew up and was educated in Italy, and his formal education would probably have been the equivalent to about two years of college in the United States. And after he was graduated from what we call high school, he went into a seminary and was, in fact,

studying to become a priest, but after, oh, about two years of it, he decided that was not for him, and decided to come to the United States. So, his parents sent him over to the United States in care of a cousin who lived in Sacramento. And at the time he came over he went to work, in hotels—whatever work he could get as a busboy—he graduated to—he became a waiter actually, and he worked in some of the resort hotels down on the coast near Santa Cruz, Monterey. And during this time in Sacramento when he'd make a little money, he'd come up to Reno, and he used to like to play. Of course, gaming was open in Reno at the time—it was condoned and not legalized. And as I told you before, the history of how he acquired the Palace Club building—or why he acquired it. Because he used to come up here and play a little game of Faro Bank. And as a young lad (he came over here at the age of seventeen) he came up here one time. He had saved four hundred dollars—he took two hundred with him, and came up, came into the Palace Club, the original Palace Club, and played and lost his two hundred.

So, he had left the other two hundred with his cousin, Mr. Santini, in Sacramento, so he wired for the other two hundred and lost that! After he lost that, why he was penniless, and he asked the proprietor for some money to get back to Sacramento and the proprietor asked him to leave the premises. So, as he walked out the door, he turned around and shook his fist at the building, and he said, "One of these days I'm going to own you!" And lo and behold, he kept his promise—he did eventually buy the Palace Club building.

But, well, he worked various jobs in the Sacramento area; he also had some relatives in the Redding-Lincoln, California area, and he went up into those areas, and—. But when he first came over, before he went to Sacramento as a young lad of seventeen, he went into a little town called Lincoln, California—and then they had other towns there called Caswick, and I can't remember the names of the other towns—but he worked in the lumber yards in those areas. And he used to recount how as a young lad stacking green lumber, he used to be so tired at night he couldn't even lift a soup spoon up to his lips to eat and he decided that wasn't for him! So he met an insurance salesman—and one thing about my dad, he learned very fast and he learned the English language as fast as he possibly could. So when he got in with this insurance salesman, he acted as an interpreter for the insurance salesman, and he sold quite a few policies and so forth and got his commission, of course, for selling the insurance policies to all of these old Italian people— not old Italian people, but the Italian people that were around that area, who couldn't understand English, and he would explain the policies to them and so on and so forth, and he didn't do too badly with that. And then, this is about all the sketchy things I know about my dad's life while he was here and a single man.

However, he was here about approximately nine years, and he went back to Italy and married my mother and brought her over here. And at that time he bought into the business with the brother-in-law, my mother's sister, name was Mazzoni, the Mazzoni family—they had the old Lincoln Hotel in Lincoln, California. And he bought in with him, and they ran the business for a while. And, of course, the women worked—waiting tables and whatever it took to make a living in those days—feeding the lumberjacks and so on. And that lasted—he married my mother in, I believe it was 1912, and they were there for approximately a year or so. My dad's health wasn't too good while he was there. Nobody could tell him what was wrong with him. So one doctor advised him that perhaps a change of climate would be better for him. So he suggested coming to Reno.

So he came to Reno and bought into what was known as the old Louvre Hotel—the Louvre Bar—[with] a gentleman by the name of Joe Elcano (incidentally, that family is still—the two boys are still here—Joe and Paul Elcano), and they operated the Louvre Bar for quite some time. And then, of course, my oldest sister Marietta was born in 1914 and my dad decided that he—oh, the Volstead Act was enacted—and he decided that he didn't want to take the chance of selling alcoholic beverages and take the chance of getting a federal arrest of any kind, so he sold out.

And at that time he had met a gentleman by the name of Bert Baroni, who came out of Dayton, Nevada. As a matter of fact his nephew is still there—has a ranch there. His sister and her husband ran a ranch—this same ranch—in Dayton, Nevada. Their name was Ricci. Anyway, Bert had a slot machine route in Reno, and my dad went to work for him as a slot machine mechanic. Now Bert had a string of racehorses, which he used to race

throughout the country, and he was away quite a bit of the time. And as a matter of fact, my dad bought a couple of horses himself and tried it out, but his horses weren't that good [laughs] so he decided, well, Dad was quite a family man, and he was away from home a lot, so he decided that he'd be better off staying in the town.

So Bert said, "Well, okay John, tell you what—I'll make you a partner in the slot machine business." He says, "You pay me off for your half from the profits." They named a price; I don't know what it was—and he says, "I'll go about my business with my horses, and you run the slot machine business in the city of Reno."

And of course, at that time the slot machines were condoned—gaming was not legal. This was, oh, I'd say—I have to go back and think a little bit, but, the early twenties—to '29, '30—gaming was condoned, slot machines were condoned, but they were not legal. Of course, he went ahead and ran the business, and he bought his share of the business and it was very profitable—everything worked out real good. And then, strangely enough, at that time the Palace building became for sale, and he bought it!

At that time, the old Graham-McKay combine with Jack Sullivan had gaming downstairs where the old Bank Club was, and they split out with their partners down there and came and got in partnership with my dad upstairs in the Palace building, and they ran that until gaming was legalized. And then, they went downstairs and opened up the Bank Club downstairs. And my dad for a few years rented the upstairs [of the Palace building] to the Graham-McKay combine so that nobody else would open up in competition with them. And he just had his building here and the slot machine route, which the Bank Club gave him—let him have the slot machines in the

Bank Club, but he was no longer in business with them.

And, let me see, then we go up until the time that gaming was legalized, the Volstead Act was repealed, and my dad opened up a bar and limited gaming—I think he had a Roulette wheel and a "21" game, and a poker game—in the old Palace downstairs. And at that time the Graham-McKay combine decided that they would keep their own slot machines, and he no longer had the slot machines in the Bank Club.

So he went on and ran the place until 1934 when I graduated from high school, and then I came to work for him in the Palace—course I had been working as a slot machine repairman and so on, from 1930 on, until I came to work in the club.

Kathryn M. Totton: Norman Biltz, in his oral history, remarks that your father leased slot machines for the Cal-Neva and the Bank Club to Graham, McKay and Sullivan until he "served them notice that he was going to take over the Palace at the expiration of their lease, and this was where. . . he broke his hold on the slot machine business because they went out and bought their own, and everybody else said what are we doing paying Johnny? So I think he lost a more lucrative business than he gained. By taking over the Palace as a gambling house." Would you like to comment on this?

Well, that's accurate to a point. When you say lease, it wasn't quite that—that arrangement wasn't right. What happened was my dad owned the slot machines—my dad and Baroni owned the slot machines—it was like a route more or less such as certain companies have now. And they would furnish the slot machines and of course the other partner would furnish the premises, and then they would split it down the middle, fifty-fifty

whatever the slot machine made. First they would take the licenses and whatever was necessary for expenses—and then what was left over, it was split right down the middle, half would go to my dad and Baroni and the other half would go to the premises or the owner of the premises. So it wasn't actually a lease deal, it was a partnership arrangement.

And I'll have to perhaps disagree with Mr. Biltz in one respect, and that is that when gaming became legal—you see before gaming became legal, the arrangement was beautiful because in the event that they would raid a place or come in and take the slot machines out, then the company, the slot machine company, which is my dad and Baroni, would stand the loss of the slot machines. Didn't happen too often, but before gaming became legal there was such a thing as "the fix" so that they could go ahead and operate and stuff. And of course, my dad and Baroni naturally had the political nod to go ahead and operate, which happened all over the state, and it happened in California many times, on the outskirts of the state of Nevada just over the border. And they had slot machines in Truckee, California; they had slot machines in various places in California. They were condoned, and they were condoned here before gaming became legal. So naturally, each individual place couldn't approach the political figures of the time and get an okay to operate, so consequently it was all done through one person or one company, and that was what happened there.

Now when gaming became legal, then my dad, in opposition to Mr. Biltz' statement—he did say one thing right, why pay him fifty percent of the profits of the slot machines when we can have our own because now it's legal and we don't need him any more, you see. We don't need the wherewithal that he had to be able to operate because now it's legal,

so we can own our own slot machines, and we don't have to pay our fifty percent. And my dad, in his wisdom, saw the handwriting on the wall; so consequently that's the reason that he decided to open up the Palace Club and let the slot machine business go, because he could see the handwriting on the wall. Pretty soon there wouldn't be any slot machine business. So consequently Mr. Biltz was a good real estate man, but he wasn't a very good prognosticator insofar as the future of the slot machine business. So I'll have to refute his statement there that he possibly lost a good business as insofar as what he gained.

Gambling in the 1920s—there's really not an awful lot to say about gambling in the twenties, except it wasn't gambling as we know it now. It was, well, in our vernacular you might call them joints, and they were very dirty; women weren't allowed in them; and the limits were very, very small, and it was just, you might say, a lot like you see in the movies—those old cigar-tilled, cigar smoke-filled rooms. Now, people [were] just betting, playing "21," Craps, Roulette, but it wasn't the most savory looking places in the world.

Dad's role in securing the legalization of gambling in Nevada—he was one of the group that went to Carson City to talk to the legislature to try to get gaming legalized in the state. Of course, Nevada at that time was known as the divorce capital of the world and not the gaming—or, Reno rather—and not the gaming. Gaming was kept low-key more or less, but there was a lot of money coming into the town and a lot of tourists coming into the town, and Nevada was hurting at the time for taxes and so on, and they thought it was just one good way to help the state along, and strangely enough, it did!

Let's see, I can go to my mother's side now. My mother grew up in Italy, as I said before, and she came from a very well-to-do family

and her education consisted of the usual schooling there in the little town, but then she and all of her sisters as they grew up had an uncle who was a priest in Livorgno—or Leghorn, if you will—and when they grew up in time to get their high school formal education, why, they were sent to Livorgno to him, and he would see that the sisters in the convent educated the girls. They spent approximately—the schools in Italy are two-year schools equivalent to our four years of high school here—and they would spend the two years there and come back educated. Now my mother married when she was nineteen—my dad came back and married her when she was nineteen years old—and they came over here, and of course, their life together from there was as I had explained before—they went into California then came up to Reno. And my first sister was born in 1914, and then my second sister was born in 1915, and then I was born in 1917, and I had a brother who was born in 1924. And that is the family. And of course, my mother stayed at home all the time and raised her family. And raised a pretty good one I might say—all the kids grew up and married and have led good lives and so on. And that is about it.

They both became naturalized citizens. That was the first thing that my dad insisted upon was that this was his country—his new-found home—and the first thing he wanted to do was become a naturalized citizen of the United States, and my dad and my mother both became naturalized citizens after he married her. Of course, he had been working towards his naturalization for a long time before that. And so, I guess that about sums up anything that I can think of.

Oh, as time went on he bought other buildings—he bought other property in Reno. He bought the building which is called the Traveller's Hotel building, which we just

recently sold to the Del Webb people. It was on the southwest corner of Commercial Row and Sierra Street. You know, where the old McMahan building was—the old furniture store there? It was right on the corner there, and the Del Webb people had bought all the property up to that, and they came to us and offered us a pretty good deal—plus the tact that it would—by holding that building and not selling it to the Del Webb people would have been like a little pimple sitting there against a big hotel and we would have stopped progress in the town, and I don't believe in that—I just don't believe in that. People have held this town down for many, many years because they'd go out and buy little pieces of property here and there and the other place so the town couldn't expand, and contrary to what these small-minded people thought, the more people that come into the town and the more businesses and hotels that grow in the town, the better it's going to be for everybody because they're just going to bring more people into the town. But, as I say, we have some small-minded people in this town, and they don't believe that way. Luckily enough, time changes that, and it has changed it in the last two or three years—as we can well see.

There weren't really any real “life experiences” other than my dad bought a house on South Virginia Street in 1920, I believe—675 South Virginia Street—my mother still lives there. I was three years old when we moved in there, and she's going to live there until she dies—she's not going to move. At the time he bought the house, I think they bought the house for sixty-five hundred dollars, and she's been offered sixty thousand for it now—wouldn't sell it though.

What kind of person was your father?

Well, he was more or less of an extrovert such as myself. I mean people tell me I'm

just a chip off the old block. And he was a very well-respected man in the community. And he belonged to the Elks Club here and some of the Italian organizations that had sprouted up early in the twenties and thirties. And he was, oh, shall we say a hail-fellow-well-met. He knew everybody in town, and everybody knew him. He always had a hello for everybody, and even to this day—he died in 1955—and people still come and reminisce about him, you know, and what a wonderful man he was. And many things that he would [do for] poor people and so forth went unnoticed, and there's a lot of things I knew about.

He was a very charitable man, and during the late twenties and early thirties they didn't have the organizations such as United Fund and all those. And he made it a point to find out some of the needy families in town, and to my knowledge he always said that he would never see anybody go hungry. And he distributed Thanksgiving baskets of turkey and food to people. Of course, we didn't have a restaurant in the club at all at the time—and of course, we didn't have the gospel mission or St. Vincent's kitchen and all those kind of things at that time—but he used to have the old Washoe Cafe next door to us which was in the building we bought here [the building to west of original Palace building], and he used to give a meal ticket to every needy person that came up to the cashier cage on Thanksgiving and Christmas. In those days during the Depression, on a Thanksgiving we'd probably give out five hundred dollars worth of meals. Say, figure a meal at that time was about a dollar and a half, so you can imagine the people we fed during the Thanksgiving days. That was custom at the Palace Club. Or he'd find out that somebody had a home without heat and he'd send a ton of coal over to the house and pay for it

or a cord of wood or whatever the people needed at the time. And these are things that I find out about now that people remember and remember him as being that type of a person. And he was just the type of fellow that got along good with people, loved them. Of course, being in this business you almost have to, you know. You have to love people to be able to conduct a business such as this.

These things I very vividly remember. Oh, he was kind of a character in his way. Lot of times, he'd see a—in those days in the vernacular we'd call them bums—walking down the street, dirty, unshaven, hair unkempt, and he'd send him to the barber shop, pay for a shave and a haircut for him to see the man get cleaned up, maybe possibly to give him some pride in himself.

And he dressed immaculately. He was a very proud man, and he always walked very erect, shoulders back and very erect. He was just a proud man and rightly so—had reason to be proud.

One thing I can say about my dad and I say it with pride, he was a very good man, he was a stern man. He believed in discipline at home, and he raised his family and he raised four pretty good kids, [who] never got in trouble of any kind or anything; and he was probably as good a provider for his family as anybody ever was in this world.

How did your father learn to be a slot mechanic when he went to work for Baroni?

He didn't know anything about slots when he went to work for him, but he just came in and asked for a job. And Baroni asked him if he knew anything, but of course my dad also was mechanically inclined such as myself. It's just a knack that we have, or he had and I have also. I'm not afraid to tackle anything mechanical. I go through the place here, go

through with the maintenance people and sometimes I give them the ideas of what to do about a problem. It's one of those things. As a matter of fact, I taught myself what I wanted out of motor mechanics, and after the war was over we had a program in the Army to keep the troops busy while they were in occupation and so forth, and I taught automobile mechanics during this program. And as a matter of fact, I was a mechanic in the war, and it was all self-taught. They wouldn't believe me when I told them that I was a mechanic because I had no background or experience when I went in; and after I got in and they gave me an opportunity to prove my knowledge, I became the company mechanic for an anti-tank company. So that's how he learned, he just went in there and stuck his nose and his hands in there and did it—period. And he was darn good at it.

Let's see now, first memories were when we moved into our home on South Virginia Street. Of course, I was three years old at the time; I vaguely remember moving in there and of course, I didn't start my education until—I did start in comparison to today's education almost a year early. I graduated from high school when I was seventeen years of age, as opposed to children graduating now; but in those days when a birthday falls in December, so I started school in September. Normally I would have had to wait until the next year, but I started school when I was five instead of six. So naturally, I was a year ahead age-wise in school.

And when we moved into the home down there, the city limits was where Center Street goes into Virginia Street. We used to have the old Diamond Springs Water Company down there, which is still in existence today, and eventually the Crystal Springs Water Company came into existence. They had wells that they would deliver water to us

and stuff, and that was the biggest the city was. I think in those days there were around possibly seventy-five hundred people in the whole town.

We had Mayor Roberts that lived up on the corner of California and Virginia Streets, and Mayor Roberts' son-in-law was Walter Johnson the baseball player. And whenever they would come to visit the mayor why I would go up and play with Walter Johnson's children, and which was quite an honor in those days, you know, to be selected. And then just down south from him was the Sullivan family, Dr. Sullivan, and he had several children, Frank Sullivan, Lawton Sullivan, and Jim Sullivan. And when we weren't fighting amongst the Dagos and the Irish, why we were pretty good friends and used to have good times together. And then south of there was a family called the McKennas, and they had children. They were not a very well-to-do family, and as a matter of fact, they used to have a goat grazing on the front yard in their front lawn. They had quite a piece of property there. And then south of them was the Melarkeys. As a matter of fact, the two Melarkey boys I grew up with are here in Reno now. One's in the oil distributing business, and the other one is a dentist, an oral surgeon, here in town, a very good one; Dave Melarkey* is his name. And all these kids I grew up with. And below them was the Carrs. Dr. Carr was a dentist in town. He had one son, his name was George.* They lived in the house next to us. And George eventually was mayor of the city here at one time and went into politics. His mother just died last year, as a matter of fact. Dr. Carr died quite a bit earlier. And then we lived, [as] I say, at 675 South Virginia Street. And then below

*Deceased since taping in 1977.

us was Bert Baroni's house which was on the corner of Virginia and St. Lawrence, as it is today. They called it a different street at that time; I forget what the name of the street was. And then across the street from us lived the McDonald family whose father was the editor of the *Reno Evening Gazette*; and his two sons, Joe McDonald and Bob McDonald, are practicing attorneys here in town now. And we all sort of grew up together as a family around the area, and we had our good times growing up as children.

The first school I went to was the Southside School. It was on the corner of Center Street and well, it was where the city hall stands now. And then just a little northeast of that on the same block was—they have some government facilities in there now; it's a tall building on the corner of Liberty and Sinclair that was a school at one time. And you went from grammar school into that school, and then over on the corner of Center and Ryland where the library now stands, they had another school there. I just sort of went from one grammar school to the other and to that school—I don't know why they changed—but they had different grades in different buildings. And then from there I went to the Northside Junior High School, which was where Harolds' parking lot is now. I was there for half a year, and then they built the old Billingshurst Junior High School. I finished my junior high school there. And then I graduated from Billingshurst Junior High, and I went to the old Reno High School over here on West and Fourth Street, and I finished my formal education there. Then after I graduated from high school why I came on over here and went into business with my dad.

And during the course of my school days—of course, in those days it wasn't the education that the children are used to today—we had the old three Rs—reading,

'riting, and 'rithmetic—and our teachers were good teachers. They were dedicated teachers, and if you didn't learn it was your own fault because they took an interest in their students. There was no political mish-mash with the teachers in those days; they didn't try to instill their beliefs or anything in you. They were there to do one thing, and that was to teach you. And I think they did a beautiful job insofar as teaching all of the children that went to school in those days.

And as a matter of fact Effie Mack who was honored here not too long ago, was our American History and Civics teacher. I was fortunate to have her as one of my teachers, a very brilliant woman and a good woman. During the winter we used to go in to high school, and we used to walk to school in the morning, walk home at noon (so, you know, the distance from old Reno High School down to South Virginia Street), walk to school in the morning, walk back for lunch, walk back again, and then walk back again. And of course, it was good for us, kept us in real good physical shape; but many times during the winter if it was snowing or something—I'll never forget Effie Mack had a Model A Ford, and she would stop and give me a ride to school. People like that you don't forget in your lifetime. And she was a beautiful teacher; if she had any knowledge to impart, she saw that you got it in a manner in which you could understand it. And if there was somebody that couldn't quite grasp the subject or something, she never hesitated to stay after school or to help them in any way she could. As far as I'm concerned, she was just a wonderful person.

My mathematics teachers, physics, chemistry, all the way through, I had nothing but respect and admiration for the teachers who taught me when I went to school. And if at times I didn't do as good as I should have, it was nobody's fault but my own because they

took the pains to— well, I'll never forget my geometry teacher—I can't recall her name at the time—but well, I was actually failing in the class; and she kept me after school one night, and she said, “You know,” she says, “I know you're capable of better than this, and some place along the line you're just not— you're not doing what you should be doing.” So she said—I failed a test as a matter of fact which was going to fail the subject for me—so, she says, “I'm going to spend some time with you, and then you're going to retake the test.”

And she did, and I took the test, and I got a hundred in it which passed me in the class. But she recognized the fact that she wasn't trying to teach someone who couldn't grasp the subject or wasn't intelligent enough. She knew that I was goofing off, as it were, and she took me and just set me down; and like I say, it was very simple when I applied myself. So, consequently in my schooling background it wasn't that I wasn't intelligent enough. If I got bad grades at any time, why it was my own fault.

Life in Reno in the twenties—Reno was always a sort of a metropolitan city. People weren't garrulous in any way, shape, or form. They were good, solid citizens. They worked hard, and the town really wasn't a town that grew big real fast like, we'll say, Las Vegas in twenty years just mushroomed out. Reno was always a conservative town, and it grew as the years went by; but they didn't really go out and solicit rapid growth, and they didn't solicit industry in the town. And rightly so because Reno was a more or less of a oh, a resort town, and heavy industry and resorts don't go hand in hand. And the reason for it, especially with gaming and stuff, is because if you get industry mixed up with gaming, why the first thing you have—gaming per se is like alcoholism; you can become addicted to it. And if you had heavy industry here

with a lot of people with families and so on and so forth, and father didn't bring home the paycheck and so on, why pretty soon it would be like the history of back East and so on, where they condoned gaming and then all of a sudden they had to close it up because it just raised havoc with the family life and so on and so forth.

Reno always remained more of a resort town and didn't solicit heavy industry or anything like that to come in. They had clean air, they had a beautiful way of life, and it grew under those circumstances. And you can go through today and find that Reno has more wealth per capita than any city in the United States, and that only means that people came here and settled here for their retirement or whatever and very well-to-do people, and in so doing they had a place where they could live the life of more or less peace and contentment without all the problems that a big city has—the crime, the poverty, and so on. And Reno today is still the same way as you can very well see. We don't have the problems that the bigger cities have—they're coming as the town grows, but the town was nice.

It was always more or less a what we might call a wide open town insofar as even during the period of Prohibition— I mean you could always get a drink if you wanted it. And it didn't hurt the town any. Of course, the government itself repealed the Volstead Act which was, I believe, the Eighteenth Amendment. They repealed it because it just didn't work, period. When you tell a person they can't have something, why that's what they're going to go off and get; but we grew up here—all the children—they always had liquor in the house, wine, beer, and even the hard stuff, whiskey, gin, whatever. And there wasn't one of us—it was at our disposal from the time that we knew it was there; we could

go and have a drink if we wanted or anything else, and there wasn't one child in the whole family or even the city of Reno—and this was kind of the way of life with every family—and they had very few alcoholics in the town or anything, but it was never denied us. And this is the problem—of course, these are my own observations now—but whenever you deny, especially a young person, something, why, that's exactly what they're going to go out and get. And Europe has proved it. They've never had Prohibition of any kind, and all the young people would sit down to dinner and have a glass of wine or whatever, but it was a way of life with them and none of them ever became addicted to it. The incidence of alcoholism in Europe is nil.

And, well, that's the way we grew up in the town in the twenties. The gaining was kept in a certain area; we had our houses of ill repute, as it were (mainly one), and that was what was commonly referred to as the old "Bullpen." It was down below the old Albers Flour Mill, you know, where they just tore down all the buildings along the river down there. And we had very, very little incidence of rape or sexual crimes of any kind at the time. But it went out when the Army came in up here at Stead; why the commanding officer of the base put it off limits to the troops—put the town off limits to the troops because of the fact that the "cribs" were down there, so the city closed them up. And that was the last of—as a matter of fact the girls often bought war bonds. And these girls used to come up when they got through work, and I knew most of them by their first name. They used to come up and sit at the bar and buy a drink and when they got away from their profession, why, you'd never know who or what they were. And they conducted themselves like ladies and no problems whatsoever. We didn't have the solicitation like we have around the town now because when

they got through work, they were through. They could care less, you know; and if they had a customer, a good customer would come down there and visit. And you didn't have the solicitation that you do on the streets and stuff now, which, incidentally, our chief of police is doing a darn good job I think of cleaning up. But that was our way of life, and we accepted it. We grew up and went to church, and we always—in those days you might call it—always had the fear of God instilled in us. And everything that went along was accepted.

What was the source of the liquor during Prohibition? Was there a local bootleg industry?

Oh. Well, let's see, as far as I can recollect (I was going to high school) it was different people that made their bathtub gin, and so on and so forth, in town. And where the actual whiskey came—I mean the liquor came for the speakeasies—I don't know. I was too young at the time to, you know, to go into the places. And I really don't know where their whiskey came from, but it was mostly I would have to say shipped in.

Now the wines, most of the people here in town had a big vat in their cellar and made their own wines. They could buy the grapes and make their own wine. And beer, I learned to make some of the best beer in the world when I was a kid. I learned from a person—I won't mention their name—but make the good old home brew. I made it so good sometimes, it'd start fermenting in the bottles and pop the corks. Oh, I had the bottle capper, the whole thing, and the strainers and the ten gallon crocks; they're earthen crockware, you know. And I've forgotten now the formula for making the beer. It was good. It was real good. And we were able to get some of the imported brandies and stuff. Now where they came from I can't tell you, really can't.

But we all had, in our home especially, my dad had wine, beer, hard liquor; and he never denied us a drink at any time. He said, "If you're going to drink, I'd rather you did it here in the house in front of me. I don't want you going out," he says, "getting some of this rot gut that they're selling out on the streets because that's going to hurt you." He says, "What we have in the house is good stuff."

And strangely enough there wasn't a one of us that ever became an alcoholic or cares to drink that much. But it was never denied us, so it was never really any big deal to go out and see what it was like. Oh, I went out and got gassed a few times, you know, dances and so on and so forth. But it really wasn't that interesting to me to drink *per se* because you don't have to drink to have fun, really you don't. And the headaches that people get the mornings after, why you just don't, you don't need it. And of course now with my interest in flying, the two don't mix at all. So, I'd much rather fly than drink. Of course when I go home at night I have a cocktail before dinner. That's it. One cocktail never hurt anybody. It's the old story: everything in moderation, including moderation. So—but there was liquor available.

Of course, we used to have a raid once in a while in the town. We called them the *prohis*. That was the name for the federal agents, prohibitionists, but they called them *prohis*. And they'd move in on a certain *speakeasy* in town, break up all the bottles, and this, that, and the other thing. But strangely enough, they broke into a couple places—I can't remember the names of the places—and, of course in those days, you know, the federal people weren't allowed to carry guns. And I recall very faintly where they broke into a couple places, and they physically threw them out and beat them up; they never came back again.

And let's see, they had some little *speakeasies* here in the Douglas Alley and some down on Lake Street and a couple over there on the east side of Center Street. And they had one or two over on Second Street where the old Grand Cafe used to be.

Of course everybody knew everybody, and I was allowed into the places from time to time. Go with my dad, you know. That's the time I was learning to repair slot machines and I was allowed in there. I didn't drink, or they didn't even offer me anything to drink. But I was allowed in to fix slot machines; then they'd run me out, and that was it. But, I knew what was going on, but the thing is you learn one thing that I think is not very prevalent today in people; in those days you just learned to keep your mouth shut and live and let live. Nobody bothered anybody; nobody got in trouble. But today everybody's sticking their nose in somebody else's business and for no reason, other than they're just busybodies. I think it was better in the old days when everybody went along their own way, and you just kept your mouth shut and left them alone. They didn't bother you, so why bother them.

And it really wasn't—during the days of prohibition when these people had their places open and so on and so forth, they would cater to the adult population, and we didn't have the rampant dope that's being sold to even grade school children today. And the ruining of bodies and minds that you have is very rampant today all over the country, all over the world you might say. And in those days, any kind of an addictive medicine or narcotic was unknown. My God, if we would maybe know one person that was addicted to morphine or something like that, probably through an illness or something, and my God, I mean that person was shunned completely because it just wasn't the right thing to do—it wasn't the "in" thing. But now when you look

around and see these young people and their minds just being, to use their vernacular, “blown,” and their bodies— what young girls do to be able to get the dope and stuff. They sell their bodies, and they become prostitutes at thirteen, fourteen years of age just because they have a habit that they have to support. I mean this is far more damaging than anything that was happening during Prohibition and in the thirties and in the whole United States. And it’s very sickening really to see what’s happening; it is to me. I just hope that there is a swinging of the pendulum where it’s reached its peak and is going to start back the other way now. But how do you reach people when they—I’ve tried to reach people on smoking. Of course there again that was—in those days that was the *in* thing to do, smoke cigarettes, which takes a long time sometimes to realize that it’s very damaging to your health.

But I try to reach people now with the smoking bit, and it’s awful hard to talk to the person and tell them to quit something which they enjoy and which their body craves, even knowing that it’s harmful to them and possibly will cost them ten years of their life. But when you talk to a young person and you say, “Now look, if you smoke this is going to take ten years of f your life.” They say, “Well, ten years, what’s ten years to me?”

But then when they get to be my age that ten years looks awful good. So, I was fortunate that I quit. I quit smoking in 1958, and I smoked three packs a day when I quit. But I just made up my mind the weed wasn’t going to get the best of me nor was it going to kill me. So I just quit and never had a cigarette since, nor do I ever intend to. I feel sorry for people who’re smoking, I really do, because I feel sorry for what they’re doing to themselves not realizing.

Of course, you know, the young people went out and things happened to them, and we

had our pregnancies and so on and so forth. But in those days they got married. They did the right thing, period. Didn’t have the incidence of abortion that you have now. As a matter of fact, I heard an article on the radio this morning coming to work that there are more and more teenage girls having sexual relations now at the age of twelve, thirteen, fourteen; and the average welfare mother now will be around between seventeen and eighteen years of age because the father takes of f. There’s no more marriage. I mean, you wonder sometimes where the morality of all this is. I mean they’re breeding like animals any more. And there’s no more religion per se, like we were brought up to believe in. And it’s really a tragic thing because all of these children are put into the world or aborted. I mean anything that you do against nature somehow or other somebody’s going to have to pay for it sooner or later, physically, mentally or whatever. I imagine that these young girls go through quite a trauma in even having a baby and putting it up for adoption and so on and so forth. It has a mental problem with the girl I would have to imagine. I mean you just can’t turn those things off. And it really worries me as to what is going to happen in the world because these children surely can’t grow up and have the proper family life. They have no father, probably don’t know who the father is. And they grow up as—they might as well be a Social Security number. They’re not a human being any more. There’s no more dignity to man’s life, and I personally—maybe I’m old fashioned—but I believe in marriage, I believe in God, I believe in going to church, I believe in respect for parents. I still allow my mother to bawl me out once in a while for—I do really. No, she’ll bawl me out because I’m getting too thin, or if I do something or say something that she doesn’t like and she’ll bawl me out. I’ll stand there and take it because she’s my mother, and I have to respect her.

But there's no more respect now for parents, or parents don't respect the children, the children don't respect the parents. They all go off on their own way, and there's just no rhyme nor reason to life with them any more. You get exposed to that quite a bit here, especially in this establishment because you get these young kids come in and want to work as busboys, so on and so forth, and young girls work as waitresses. And I'd, you know, I ask them sometimes, well, "How old are you?"

"Eighteen, seventeen."

I said, "Do you live at home?"

"Oh, no, I left home a long time ago."

"Where are your parents?"

"Oh I don't know. My father's up in Seattle, and my mother's down in California."

"They split up?"

"Yeah, they decided to split a long time ago, and I had no place to go or anything, so I went to work."

And again, the boys with their long hair, there's just something that's not manly about them any more. And they're unkempt; they're really dirty; they're dirty looking. And everyone of them's smoking a cigarette, and their clothes—I mean they have no desire to look good. I mean they're just satisfied to be, you might say, bums.

Now I notice here you have character sketches. We had not so many characters in the town as—not like Damon Runyon would have in New York or something like that because everybody sort of went along and did their thing. And the community was aware of the gaming. It wasn't behind closed doors or anything. It was wide open, condoned, and that's it. And nobody said anything about it or anything. Once in a while you'd get a preacher would get up and try to shout it down and stuff, you know, from the pulpit and it would get in the papers and then that'd be the end

of it. But everybody was aware of it, and it was just a beautiful way of life really. Nobody bothered anybody, and everybody knew everybody in town. Nobody cared what your business was or anything else. We had our lawyers and our doctors and our gamblers, and everybody respected each other, just a beautiful way of life. So that's about all of the observations.

We had our racetrack out here where the fairgrounds is now; we used to have horse races during the summertime. And we had some big name fighters come in on the Fourth of July. We had our nightclubs, and I remember one was the—that's back in the twenties—was the Willows, was out on Mayberry Drive. And then we had another, another club out where the Chef's Hat is now, a nightclub, and I forget what the name of it was. And then we used to have a nightclub down at the old Columbo Hotel, and at the old Toscano Hotel we used to have Italian dinners, Basque dinners.

Strangely enough what we don't do as much of today as we used to do—the families would all get together—several families would get together and go out to Galena Creek or go up to Lake Tahoe at the north shore and have picnics. And there used to be an old place up there at Hirshdale, California—used to call it Camp Scammus—we used to go up there and have picnics up there along the river.

In the early days my dad used to rent a horse and buggy and take us to Lawton Springs which is now where the River Inn is, and we called it Lawton Springs in those days. And that was an all day affair, take a horse and buggy and pack up a picnic basket, go out there and spend the day, and then come back at night. This was before anybody had an automobile.

Oh, incidentally, my dad always prided himself in he had one of the first automobiles

in town, and every night after dinner why the whole family would go out for a ride, maybe down to Steamboat and back. One of the first cars that I remember he had was an old 12-cylinder Haines, and he used to let me sit in his lap and drive the car. Of course he was driving it, but I thought I was—you reminisce about things that happened. Then we'd maybe once a year—they used to have an old steamer on Lake Tahoe—we'd take the train from (you know, I think there was a piece in the paper the other night where they discontinued the train from Truckee, California to Tahoe City) —but we used to go on Southern Pacific to Truckee and then take the train from Truckee to Tahoe City, get on the steamer, and that was an all day affair. We'd get on the steamboat, and it'd make a circle of the Lake and come back and get off at Tahoe City and come back on the train that night. And we looked forward to that every year to go around Lake Tahoe.

And of course during the early thirties when I was still going to high school, they had the old Cal-Neva Club at the Lake which was owned by James McKay and Sullivan, Graham; and on weekends I used to go up there and take care of the slot machines. I used to fix anything that would go broke on the slot machines. And Dad had the slot machines there, too, at the old Cal-Neva Club at the Lake. Of course that went with the advent of [legalized] gaming and so on— when gaming came in we lost that, too. But my life as a young person was very good. I enjoyed my life and had no problems whatsoever; and my high school, I've told you about my teachers and so on.

Now my youthful employment—well, the first job I ever had in my life was in a Piggly Wiggly store—probably comparable to what a bag boy is today. However, in those days it wasn't so much a bag boy as keeping the

shelves stocked and the vegetable bins stocked and watered and so on. And I worked after school on Tuesday afternoons and Thursday afternoons when they had their specials on. And as a matter of fact, the Piggly Wiggly store was just south across the street from where we lived. And all day Saturday which was—all day Saturday consisted of going to work at six o'clock in the morning, and the last thing we did before we closed up the store at nine o'clock at night was oil the floors with linseed oil. So you see it was quite a long day. And on Saturdays I used to make two dollars and fifty cents; and on the weekdays when I'd go after school, I'd make a dollar each day. So I used to get four dollars and fifty cents a week, and I used to go out after I'd get through work on a Saturday night and have a wonderful time and still have money left. But those days are gone forever.

And of course we used to have our high school dances on Friday nights, and then Saturday night a fellow by the name of Tony Pecetti had—they called it Tony's Ballroom, which was on the corner of Commercial Row and Arlington. They just tore it down I think a couple of years ago. It's a parking lot now. Used to be a union hall if you recall. But Tony used to play the accordion, and he had an orchestra; and we used to go to the Friday night dances and also Saturday night which was open to the public. But the Friday night dances were for the school children, high school kids. And so we used to really have a good time there. Of course, we used to have our little bickerings and fights and so on and so forth, but everybody got along together and everybody knew everybody. And just had our good times, that's all; kids used to just look forward to our Friday nights and Saturday nights going to dances and so forth, take a girl, but sometimes go stag and find somebody and take them home. And of

course you'd go to a drive-in after the dance and have a hamburger and a milkshake or whatever. It was a lot of fun, really was. We enjoyed it and were all good kids.

We had our ups and downs, but nothing as to what children enjoy today and not one twentieth as costly as a kid goes out today and a twenty dollar bill doesn't last the evening. And really there were no such things as pot parties and different parties at different children's homes because the home was more or less of a place where the family stayed together. And kids didn't wait for the parents to leave town or something, so they could throw a big party in their house and all that kind of stuff. Who would dare? Well, in the first place our parents would never leave us home, either we went with them or we stayed with somebody else. I believe that today parents are not as strict as they should be because children like to be told what to do, what they can do and what they can't do. And when they're given a free rein, I think it rubs them the wrong way because they feel ignored. And I sincerely believe this from the fact that we grew up the way we did. And we married and had our families, and we had a family life. And so many children today don't have that. They grow up, they live with each other, and to me that still rubs me the wrong way. I don't think that's the way the good Lord intended us to live our lives. I mean the sanctity of marriage still holds something to me that it possibly doesn't to other people, but that's the way it was meant to be. And you can change it as much as you want, but I think you see now an influx of children or the whole community going back to the religious side of life. I find it so. Of course, I happen to be Catholic, but if you'll go to your churches I think you'll find an influx of people that have gone back to religion. They've seen the other side of it, and someplace along the

line—of course I'm expounding on something here that has nothing to do with what we're talking about—but they've seen the other side of life and someplace along the line, they've lost their self-respect. And so when you lose your self-respect you are not a whole human being any more; then you must turn back to— either turn back or seek something that is going to help you. And the older people turn to their religion, and the younger people probably turn to religion to find a new way of life. Psychologically I think it's having its impact. don't know whether you've noticed it or not, if you've given it any thought at all.

Anyway, and again I say as far as the gaming business is concerned, it took me a long time to understand why if you went out of the state or anything—and I was always proud of being in the gaming business because it's the only life I knew, and it was a good business. And like I say, my dad conducted it on the square, and the only gaming that I knew was gaming on the square, so consequently I was proud of it. But if you left the state and went someplace and told somebody you were in the gaming business, they kind of shunned you, you know. They looked at you like you were a hoodlum or a character or something, and it took me a long time to accept this from people who outwardly tried to show you that they were holier than thou; and yet if the truth were known, chances are people like my dad and the people that were in the gaming business were probably much better people than people that shunned them. Because who are they to judge, really, another person and their way of life or what they did for a living as long as they didn't steal from somebody, you know, or cheat somebody out of something?

Then from there I went to work in my dad's slot machine shop which was in Lincoln Alley over in the old Golden Hotel building. And I started to learn the slot machine

business. That was around 1930, and let's see, I didn't become a slot machine mechanic in the Palace Club. I learned this a long time ago. While I was still going to high school I started to learn the slot machine business, and that's probably what decided me. No—I'll go further than that—that didn't decide me to stay in the business; but after I graduated from high school, being mechanically inclined as I said before, I went to talk to a fellow by the name of Lou Spitz who was one of the people who grew up with me—he's a little older than I am—but you probably no doubt know Lou. He was with the motor vehicle department here for many years and then went to Washington and was always more or less in the police business, not as a policeman per se, he was more in administrative positions. And talking to him about—what I really wanted to do was to go to that Boeing School of Aeronautics in Oakland, California and learn airplane instruments and make them my profession. It was a goal that I had, and I talked it over with my parents and of course they immediately thought that I wanted to learn to fly, and they were both dead set against it. So they just said no, you just can't go there, that's all, period. And of course in those days you respected your parents, and if it was no, it was no. So they said, "You can go to school, go to college," and they had the wherewithal to send me to any college in the United States. And I had the grades to go, but I said no. I got kind of bull-headed, you know, of course, my dad was bull-headed too. If he set his mind to something, that was it. So I said if that's the case, if I can't go and do what I want in school, why then I'll just go into business with my dad and I'll work here because I already had a smattering of—. And that was my introduction to the gaming business.

So, I had quite a few experiences in the club here. I went in cold as the boss's

son, and I didn't know anything about the gaming business, and shall we say, I learned it from—rather than from the bottom up, I learned it from the top down. But I did learn every game we had at the time and how to deal it and protect it from cheaters and so on and so forth. And I'm one of the few people left in the United States today, you might say, that can still deal Faro Bank. You ever hear of Faro Bank?

It's a very complicated game. It's a very simple game, but yet it's one of the most complicated there is; and the complication comes in the way that you can make your bets and so on and so forth. But like I say I'm one of the few people that can still deal today. And I learned every game, how to protect it. And one incident, [there was] an old guy—his name was Ira Stewart, he's dead now, Faro Bank dealer—and at the time I was learning to deal Faro Bank, so one night one of the shift bosses brought me over to Ira and introduced me to him, said, "Now," he said, "this is the boss's son," and so he said, "I want you to teach him everything you can about Faro Bank."

So Ira looked at me and he looked at the shift boss, and he says, "To hell with him, let him learn the way I did."

So I said—I won't say what I said—but, "You old so-and-so." I said, "I'll learn just the way you did!" And I just set my mind to it, and I didn't ask him for any help from there on out at all, and I learned.

But he gave me the incentive, you see; he did the right thing because he knew that if I thought that I was going to go on through life gaining knowledge from other people because I was the boss's son, I had another think coming because someplace along the line people were going to rebel. So consequently, he gave me the insight to know that people were not going to help me because I was the boss's son, but they would rather help me if I

weren't, if I was just a common character who wanted to learn something. So it just gave me much more incentive to go ahead and learn.

We had people—I can't remember their names now—but they would come up from California, here, there and the other places. We'd always know them and know exactly what they were going to do. They would come up and go broke, and then want train fare home or bus fare home and stuff like that. And you'd know exactly what they were going to do because they'd come up, and you'd say, "Hi, Joe or John or whatever. Now give me five dollars; I'll hold it for you. When you're broke, then I'll give it back to you for your bus fare home."

"Don't worry. I can handle my own money. Don't worry about a thing." So pretty soon, "Hey, Sil!"

"What's the matter?"

"I'm broke."

I said, "Didn't I tell you to save five dollars to go home?"

"Yeah, I know, but you know how it is. Give me five to go home."

[Chuckling] So we'd have to give it to him naturally because they'd come back up again the next week or two weeks and do the same thing all over again. But it was just a way of life.

Some people used to—they'd come up and they'd cash a check or something, and they had it in their mind, you know, that they weren't going to pay. If they lost they weren't going to pay, period. They'd stop payment on the check. So what we used to do is on Monday morning, I would leave here about four o'clock in the morning, drive down to Sacramento or San Francisco or wherever it was and be the first in line to the bank to cash their check. Well, they naturally didn't get up in time to stop payment on the check before I had already cashed the check. And they

would come up here the next week or so and just raise seven kinds of hell with me saying, "How could you do this to me?"

I said, "Because you were going to do it to me." And it was just a lot of fun really, but it was a way of life in those days, just a way of life. Now of course it's a little different situation; you have your credit systems and so on. That's it.

LIFE IN RENO, 1930-1943

The banks tailed in 1932, the Wingfield banks. And of course, George Wingfield was a very good man. As a matter of fact, his son is still in business here, as you know; and George was the type of person that—as a matter of fact, I was just discussing with my mother the other day, and she had nothing but praise for George Wingfield. I didn't know him too well because, you know, as a kid. But he many times would go to my dad and say, "John, there's a building for sale." Such as the Palace—my dad didn't have the money to buy the Palace, so George Wingfield loaned him the money through the bank.

Of course, he paid it back—don't misunderstand—but the thing is that my dad said to George, "George, I don't have the money.

He says, "Don't worry about the money. You've got the money. Buy the building, John; it'll be good for you. It's something that I think will be good for you. Buy it. You deserve to have it."

And then he bought the old Travellers Hotel building over here, which we sold to

the Del Webb people, and George Wingfield loaned him the money on that. George was the type of person that would always help somebody. And let's say that he was too good for his own good, but he was this type of person. And he had loans out, of course, that he couldn't collect on when the Depression hit, and that's what closed the banks. But that happened all over the United States. It wasn't him alone. And he was a very well-respected man, really was. And I have nothing but praise for George Wingfield. And I don't know his son. I just know him to say hello to him, but his son is a very well-respected person in the community today.

And the leading figures of the town—of course, I didn't know anybody outside of the gaming profession, but— and I call it a profession, and to me it is just as honorable and as good as being a doctor or a lawyer or a schoolteacher or anything else. It doesn't make any difference what walk of life you're in or come from; if you conduct your life so that you treat people properly, why it doesn't make any difference what you do. As

a matter of fact, some people in what we call the respectable professions are snobs and so on. So consequently, I just can't have enough praise for people in the gaming industry. They were honorable people; if they incurred debts, they paid them; and if they gave you their word, that was it, period. You could depend on them, just like you depend on the sun coming up in the morning. It was a way of life with them; you didn't have to have something in writing like you do today, and a bunch of lawyers to put it down in legal form because somebody's going to do something to somebody. In those days if you shook a man's hand and said this is the way it's going to be Monday morning, that's the way it was. And if it couldn't be, if something happened in the meantime that it couldn't be, the man wasn't ashamed to go up and say, "Look, I can't pay you today because this, this and this happened to me, but you'll get your money in the next couple of days when I can straighten this out." But today if somebody owes you something, they shun you, they walk around the other side of the street. They get away from you because they don't want to have to answer to you. It wasn't that way in those days. I'm very adamant about the respect, the respectability of the people in the gaming industry, really. I'm very adamant about it because they were good people, and they were honorable people. Their word was good, period.

Now, the effects of the Depression. Reno was a very fortunate town. We heard about the soup kitchens and everything back East, but Reno never really experienced the Depression such as the United States knew it in those days. And like I say, my dad was a good provider, and all the time during the Depression and stuff, we didn't feel the Depression here like it was felt all over the United States. Of course, naturally it was tough, but it wasn't that tough that people couldn't live—and without putting

food on their own tables. And strangely enough, and you'll find this happens in a resort town or a gaming town such as Reno or Las Vegas, that no matter what happens around the rest of the country, whatever the situation is insofar as the Depression or whatever, the people always have money to go out and entertain themselves. Be it that they say, "Well, things are going bad here and so on and so forth, we've got X number of dollars, let's go out and have a good time before it turns completely bad," you know.

And this is a way of life, and we always had people coming into the town. We always had money come into the town, and Reno never felt the Depression like the rest of the United States, it really didn't. Because of the gaming and so on, and being a resort town. Of course we didn't have the factories shutting down; we didn't have all the industry and so on; and we didn't have a bunch of families that didn't have work and so on because there weren't that many people to begin with. And everybody made a dollar, you know. They were able to continue to live.

And well, we always had the gaming at the Bank Club and so on, and they all made money during the Depression—they *all* made money. So the Depression really didn't affect Reno like it affected the rest of the country. It didn't affect the gambling industry that much. Oh sure, there were tough times sometimes, but the expenses weren't as great as they are today and so on. Everybody was able to exist.

Then of course Roosevelt was elected, and he started the WPA projects and the CCC camps and all. And that spread a little money around, and then in 1936, I believe, they declared a bonus to the World War I veterans—I think it was 1936—or it was enacted in 1935 and it was distributed in 1936. And that was a real boost to the economy around here. There was enough for

everybody—everybody on the West coast—I mean all the veterans of World War I got their bonus, and that was a real boom to the economy in Reno for the summer of '36 and '37. And then of course things started to boom all over the country on account of the wars in Europe and so on. And that was the start of the recovery, you might say.

About how many people were employed in the gambling industry during the thirties?

Oh, roughly, I'd say and this is a calculated guess, I'd say within the city of Reno about a thousand people. [Out of a population of seventy-five hundred?]

Well, no. At the time when gaming was legalized in the thirties and so on, I'd say that Reno was closer to fifteen thousand people at that time. It had grown—so it was about fifteen to one as far as the population of the people in the gaming industry and the rest of the town. But don't forget we had a lot of ranching here, and we had the railroad. Southern Pacific, you know, had their big shops in Sparks, which was a division point incidentally, and Roseville was the next one. They did all the mechanical work here at their shops in Sparks, the Southern Pacific; and that was quite a payroll. And we must not lose sight of the fact which I mentioned before that many very affluent people settled here and bought homes out in the southwest part of town, ranches and so on and so forth. They lived in the county, but still they were a part of the community. And of course, you had your bars in Reno, and you had your professional people such as your doctors and your lawyers. And you had different specialties such as flower shops, and as a matter of fact I worked as a delivery boy one summer for a flower shop here in town. And let's see what else—

Then of course Roosevelt was elected, and we had the WPA projects and so on, and [the town] had a little influx of population from those people coming in and getting work. When things started looking bad, I mean war-wise, they had Herlong up here, and then they built Stead. And we had the Washoe County Golf Course was where it is now, and that was the original Reno airport, you know. It was where the golf course is now. Lindbergh landed there, you know, on his tour after he made his flight across the ocean. They called it Blanch Field. It was named after an English flier by the name of Blanchfield, and he crashed here and got killed. As a matter of fact, he was flying over dropping something from the airplane as a memorial service, and he crashed and got killed. To this day—I think it stopped in the last couple of years—they always sent over some flowers from England to put on his grave. It was a custom in his family. And then of course United Airlines built the Hubbard Field out here in conjunction with the Air National Guard which came in during the war, and that's when they moved the airport. United Airlines owned that airport there for many, many years, and the city of Reno bought it from United Airlines. That's why United has the little bit of clout that it has. Of course they're slowly losing that too, because of the competition from people—you know, different airlines wanting to move in. Of course that's another story too. Eventually we'll get to it.

In 1934 [Raymond I.] "Pappy" Smith came to town and rented a building over on Virginia Street and started business with the Penny Roulette and also had some mice in the windows, and you could make a bet on which hole the mouse would go into. It [was] a little round thing, and the mice running around there. And there were times when people would go there with a little piece of cheese

and get him to go in one hole or another. It was comical. It was a strange thing. At that time everybody that was anybody in the gambling business when Pappy Smith came to town (and this includes myself) laughed at him with his Penny Roulette and his mice running around in this little circular affair. It had holes around it, you know, and you could bet on which hole the mouse would run into. And as I say, everybody laughed at him. They thought he was crazy. Of course, when Pappy Smith came here, he was an old carnival man, and he knew how to advertise. But anyway as time went on, why he grew and grew and grew. And nobody thought he would get as big as he did. But everybody watched him, and everybody said that there's no chance for him. And this was the consensus of opinion all over town.

So, as he grew one day—strange thing, Jack Sullivan came in to talk to my dad about something. It was during the Fourth of July celebration, and they were in the office. Of course, as you grow up in a town, you know, the kid grows up and the kid is going to learn. So Jack and my dad were talking about business and a few other things—they were always sort of arguing back and forth on wage scales and this and that and the other thing. I told them, I said, “You know, you people sit here on Center Street bickering back and forth and arguing amongst each other, and you can't see the forest for the trees. You're watching somebody grow strong on Virginia Street, and it's going to break you both.”

And I'll never forget Sullivan's reaction to that. My dad didn't say anything, and Sullivan said—patted me on the face, you know, which I just loved [sarcastically], “It's all right my boy; there's plenty of business for everybody.”

“Oh, okay, fine, you guys go ahead and bicker then.”

So strangely enough my prediction came true in effect that the bulk of the business was

brought over onto Virginia Street, as opposed to Center Street. My expression of breaking them was not really correct, but I did say that. But it did put a dent in both places at that time. And, of course, it's hard for a young person to go and tell older so-called experienced people that somebody's going to give them untold competition. But it came to pass, and I kind of pride myself on being able to predict the success of Virginia Street in the gambling business.

And Smiths grew with the town, and yet they became part of the town. Of all the people in my estimation that I've seen (other than Harrah) that have come into the town and been in the business in town, all of a sudden they become indoctrinated into the philosophy of Reno, that Reno should be kept small and so on. And they did a darn good job of doing it, until the advent of Bill Harrah, because no doubt with the money that was made by the Smith family and Fitzgerald—in effect, they didn't plow it back into their establishments which is very evident by what's happened in the town. They sort of sat back on their laurels and watched Bill Harrah just get stronger and stronger and stronger. It's the old history repeating itself all over again, which as long as I wasn't a part of it, I used to be able to sit back and objectively see what was going on.

And of course, as you can see, the Smith family eventually sold out to the Hughes organization which is another do-nothing organization, in my estimation. They came into the state of Nevada. They bought up all going businesses and kept them going. Their remodeling and processes in their business—that just started in the past year—they started to remodel the Desert Inn in 1977, and they started to remodel—oh, they've torn the buildings down here in 1978. So actually in coming into the state of Nevada, everybody

thought it was the great panacea of the gaming industry, and I could see nothing wrong with it before.

The people that pioneered Las Vegas, even though people said they were hoodlums, they sure did a good job of it down there. And there was no—you know everybody talks about the stigma of this and the stigma of that, well, where is it? What was it? Who went to jail? Who was arrested and all that kind of stuff? I mean—[it is said that] the greatest thing that could have happened to the state was Howard Hughes coming in here. In my estimation Howard Hughes was a bum. His whole organization is—they're bums. They've done nothing to further anything in the state of Nevada. And if anybody can show me what they've done, I'd like to see it. Nobody ever stopped to think of it that way; Howard Hughes was a great man—he was a great nothing, in my estimation.

He just bought up a lot of stuff and that was it, period, and just continued to run it. As a matter of fact, if the truth were known it's all been downgraded. The best thing that he's got going now that I can see, is Harolds Club itself. And he's got a darn good manager there in J. C. Jordan, I might say that too, I might add that. J. C. is a very astute man, very good man in this business. But anyway, so much for the Smith family. They came in, they were very successful in the town, they ran a good, honest business. I'll say that for them. But again it's the old story, they couldn't see the forest for the trees. They just stood there with their Harolds Club. They let it go so far; they couldn't see a hotel or this, that, the other thing. It was more or less you might call it their plaything. You know after the old man—after Pappy Smith died, why—I don't know what happened insofar as the business was concerned, but I guess they were offered a good price from the Hughes people for it.

They sold out which I wonder whether that was a good idea or not to.

Now as far as Bill Harrah, I knew Bill—so much for the Smith family—I knew Bill Harrah when he first came to Reno back in the thirties, and he had a bingo parlor on Virginia Street, and a little bar in Lincoln Alley over here called the Blackout Bar. And Bill was always a very wonderful person, in my estimation, and I've known him since he came to town. As I say, I knew him since the thirties. And he sort of grew up in the business and with the town. I say grew up with it, I mean not as a young fellow growing up in it or something, but he grew with the town and the business in the town. And Bill always ran a very good business, and he was definitely an asset to the gaming industry in every respect. And of course there was a period there in 1943 'til I came back from the Army in 1945—I have, you know, no knowledge of what went on in the town—but then in 1947 Bill opened up the Harrah's Club on Virginia Street, a very nice place, an asset to the town. At that time he had Warren Nelson as his general manager. And he was very successful with the Harrah's Club in town; then of course he bought the old Stateline Club at Lake Tahoe and made it into what it is today. And Bill was, you might say, a go-getter, and he could see the future of Reno and the possibilities of Reno and Lake Tahoe. And the end result is what you see now, what he has been able to do with his organization.

So consequently what he has done, a lot of people say, "Well, he has blocked traffic on the street and this and that and the other thing." But that happens to be the nature of the beast. He had something, and he had to do something with it. So consequently, in time, I think that he'll iron out all of his difficulties insofar as irritating people, as far as the traffic, and so on and so forth. But I have the highest of respect for Bill Harrah. We've been friends

throughout the years, and every time he sees me, he's the first one to come up and say, "Hello Sil, how are you?" and shake my hand. So his success has not gone to his head as it were. I like Bill—that's about the best I can say.

"Baldy" West, I never really had too much to do with Baldy. He was in the gambling business around the town of Reno for many, many years, a very sharp man, knew the business backwards and forwards. Of course, he's dead now. And when my dad leased the place out originally in 1943 when I went into the Army, why Baldy was one of the partners who came in here. And he subsequently bought out all the rest of the partners and ran the Palace Club until his lease expired.

And Baldy also was very successful man in the business. When you lease something, naturally unless the lease is very binding, why, they didn't do too many improvements or anything. Of course, at the time that they were in here, they couldn't really because the war was on, and materials were hard to get and workmen were hard to get and so on. But he ran a very—again, an honest business and a very successful business. And then after we came back to Reno, why I lost track of Baldy. He was around town for quite a while and worked in several establishments—I believe over at the Horseshoe and the last I think was down at the Holiday Hotel, if I recall. And then he got sick and died. We weren't the best of friends; we were not the worst of friends, said hello to each other and so on. There was just a passing acquaintance that's all.

Now we go to Bill Graham and Jim McKay and Jack Sullivan. Those people I knew from the time that I was a little boy and grew up here. Of course, as I say, they were partners of my dad upstairs in the old Palace Club and then they moved down to what was known as the Bank Club which is Harrah's today. And as I said before, my dad had the slot machines

in the Bank Club and so on. And when he opened up over here, why then they decided to agree to disagree—there was no contract. In those days if you shook a man's hand and said, "You're in," you were in, and that was it. I mean they didn't have to have contracts in those days and all written out, spelled out and so on. But they were honorable men insofar as if they said they would do something, why that was it, they'd do it, period. Of course Jim McKay and Bill Graham and Jack Sullivan, they're all three dead now.

Jack Sullivan was more or less, the mainstay of the Bank Club. He was the worker; he ran the casino, and he put in many, many hours. And he was a very hard taskmaster. But he ran a successful business. And Bill and Jim had the old Cal-Neva at the Lake. And they used to spend most their summers up there, you know, running that business up there. Jack was always here at the Bank Club running the Bank Club. And of course Bill Graham and Jim McKay both got in trouble as we all know and went to jail for a while over a few things that they did. And Jack then ran the Bank Club all during the time that they were in jail.

Of course, after I came back from the Army why I renewed my acquaintances with Bill and Jim. Jack had died, I think. If he hadn't died, he was a sick man—I forget which. But then they eventually sold the old Bank Club out to—I don't know who it was that they sold it out to because I was down in Vegas at that time. And the Tomerlins bought the Bank Club, the old Golden Hotel and then it subsequently burned down. And they built what they called the Golden, which is history—and then Harrah's bought them out and built the hotel, which is what we have now on the site of the old Bank Club.

Of course, Bill Harrah as he went along, bought up property. During the time he was on

Virginia Street, Johnny Petrinovich had the old Grand Cafe and Harrah's used that. They had a business arrangement where Harrah used that as his restaurant. And then eventually Harrah bought that property through there and then started buying up towards the Golden. There was one little piece of property between what was Harrah's corner store or corner gaming house and the Golden and that was owned by the Donderos. And that's where he had his bingo parlor for a long time which he leased. After he was able to buy that property, why then he spread on through from the Golden all the way down to Second Street. But there was that one little piece of property in there that was owned by the Donderos, and he didn't do anything with that until he was able to purchase it.

But Bill Graham and Jim McKay were all very colorful figures. I don't know where Bill came from, but Jim McKay came out of Tonopah when he came into Reno. And I don't know where Jack Sullivan came from, but they were very astute businessmen, and they were very successful, very successful. That's about all I can say for them.

[Here are two opinions of Bill Graham and Jim McKay:

" . . . prominent men who had clout and commanded respect. Bill Graham was a breezy, garrulous man who liked to hold court at the Grand Cafe bar on Center Street. Jim McKay was smaller, brainier and more aloof."*

"As far as our business was concerned, they always ran very square joints. They didn't try to cheat anybody. . . They had money and they were both very well respected in the community."** How accurate are these descriptions?]

That is probably as correct as you can get. I'll go further, Bill Graham was a very tall,

astute man, and he did, as you say, as you can call it—holding court as it were. But both of the men were very well respected in the community, and during the time that my dad was in business with them upstairs in the Palace Club and all during the time that my dad ran the Palace Club after he separated from them, I could unequivocally say that that was the advent of square gambling, as it is known today. These men and my dad foresaw that cheating people in gaming wasn't the way to go; and they knew this, and all the time that they ran their businesses they ran them on the square. And they didn't need a Gaming Commission or a Tax Commission or a Gaming Control Board. These people ran their businesses just like they're running them today and just like I'm running the Palace Club today because there's nothing stronger than square gambling. You'll have your losses, and you'll have your wins, but they were the first people to realize that volume would make them more money than trying to cheat somebody out of a couple dollars. And they worked on volume, and I know of no instance where anybody was cheated in either one of these two establishments, and the same holds true today. So when they say that they needed government intervention to clean up gambling, they possibly did, but not with these people or my dad. We didn't need it. We didn't have to cheat people.

Did you know Tex Hall, an associate of Graham, McKay, and Sullivan?

Tex Hall I didn't know nor did I know of him. Excuse me, I've heard the name, but

*David Toll, *Gold Hill News*, April 27, 1977

**Warren Nelson, *Gold Hill News*, April 27, 1977

I know nothing of him to—I really couldn't say anything about him at all. I just vaguely remember the name. If anything, he was in the background, completely in the background.

Let's see—now Warren Nelson—Warren Nelson came into Reno in 1936 and there's a little history as to how he got to Reno. Warren was living in Great Falls, Montana; and we had a gentleman here by the name of Francis Lyden who approached my father about putting—at that time we called it Racehorse Keno and now it's called Keno—but putting Keno in the Palace Club. So my dad listened to it and to his proposition and decided it was all right.

However, there was a problem insofar as Keno that it might be considered a lottery. And my dad went to Carson City and had a talk with the governor at that time [Richard Kirman, Sr.] and the powers that be; it was decided that Keno could be operated in the state of Nevada and would not be deemed a lottery because Nevada has a law against lotteries. So they deemed that it would not be classified as a lottery, so Francis Lyden brought in—there were no experienced Keno writers or anything—so Francis Lyden went back to Montana and brought in several experienced Keno people. And Warren happened to be one of them. And Warren Nelson got his start right here in the Palace Club as a Keno writer. And he subsequently married my sister, and then they were divorced. And Warren went on about his business in town. And so my dad leased the place out, and somehow or other Warren got in here on a one or two percent partnership which was not supposed to be, but he did. And he was in here until nineteen, oh, about 1962 or '63. I forget when they opened the Cal-Neva, but he left the Palace Club at that time, and they bought him out. And he went into partnership in the Cal-Neva then on Second Street.

And I might add right now that the Palace Club was the original home of Keno. It was the first Keno in the state of Nevada, and I guess that's so much for Warren Nelson. The rest is history as far as he's concerned.

How long was he here at the Palace Club?

Oh, he was here in the Palace until 1942, I believe, and he went into the Marine Corps at that time.

And as I said, Jack Douglass and Bill Fong I didn't know at that time. I just couldn't make any observations on those two people at all, other than Jack Douglass went into partnership with Warren and a few other people down at the Cal-Neva Club. Jack was around town for a long time here. He was in the restaurant business I believe with Leon Nightingale, restaurant and bar business with Leon Nightingale, which is another partner in the [Cal-Neva Club].

Why is Keno not considered a lottery?

What is different about it is in the way that it's interpreted in the federal laws, and gaming— (now this pertains to all games) and that is how it's worded, and you can go back and find it. The bets must be placed, the winners determined, and all winners must be paid off in the presence of all other players participating in the game. So consequently a lottery is a game whereby people can make a bet like on—well, let's say it's going to be a lottery. The racetrack itself is a lottery. I'll tell you why, because they take in a certain amount of money, right? They tabulate this amount of money, and they allot so much to prizes, so much to overhead, and so much to profit. So you see the people themselves are, in effect, the whole amount of people playing are paying for the winners, right?

Okay. Now in Keno or Roulette or Craps or "21," it doesn't make any difference what all the other people do. If all the people win, the house suffers the loss. You see what I mean? So consequently it can't be a lottery because the people that are playing in there—you don't say, "Well, you're going to win, you're going to win, you're going to lose, you're going to lose, and you're going to—I'm going to keep so much of what you lose to pay this fellow what he's going to win. In other words he's not guessing on something on a number or anything like that. He's playing a game of chance, and Keno per se is a game of chance in that you have several players playing the game, true, and they all play a certain ticket or each one has his own favorite ticket he wants to play and so on and so forth. Okay. Now you turn around, and one player might win twenty-five thousand dollars, but these other players in that particular one game have not contributed twenty-five thousand dollars to his payoff. So I suffer the loss. You see what I mean? So there—that differentiates between a lottery and a game of chance, you see.

So again, in a lottery everybody contributes to a central pot, and then they draw a number of numbers. These people win a certain amount of that contribution, but not so in a gambling game or Keno because you might have everybody contribute to a certain game, and nobody wins anything. And then, you might have everybody contribute to a certain game, and one person might win twenty-five thousand dollars, but you can't say that all the rest of the people that contributed, we'll say five thousand dollars will win there, but any number of people could win on that game. There they determine only certain winners, period; so that differentiates between a lottery and a game of chance. And in a lottery, for instance, like the numbers racket or something like that, you send. in your bet

and you might be in Timbuktu when they make the drawing, and you win or you don't win. But here the bets are placed, the winners are determined, and the payoffs are made in the presence of all of the players participating in the game. And it remains true with Keno or anybody else, or anyplace else. But the one thing that also differentiates it from a lottery is that if you do not come collect your ticket before the start of the calling of the next game, then by federal law we don't have to pay you because you weren't there to participate in the—in other words your payoff was not made in front of all the players participating in that particular game. So you see if you go out, you could go to the bathroom down here, and we've had it happen—of course the federal government doesn't hold us right to that. But we have a sign up there (I'll show it to you when we go out), but they don't hold you right to the point, you know; but if you go to the bathroom, you come up there and we've already called another game, by law we don't have to pay you.

And there again you have conflicting laws because the state of Nevada says if you have a winner, you have to pay him. The federal government says—it's comical really I mean how two big entities can be at loggerheads with each other and neither one of them are doing anything to adjust the situation. Because the state of Nevada says you must pay this man.

Now the federal government requires that you have over a sliding scale a certain amount of money; you must take the person's identification and Social Security number for tax purposes and file a form 1099. Okay, now if the person won't give you that identification—and he's not required by law to do it, he can tell me to go to hell—now, the state of Nevada says I have to pay you; the federal government says don't pay him

unless he shows the identification. So, they put you right in the middle. So when that happens, I just go and say, well, I can do one of two things: I can pay the man and say he refused to give me any identification, maybe give a description of him; or I can call an Internal Revenue agent, which you can't do in the middle of the night, because they quit work at four o'clock and that's it. So consequently, you see, you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. But you have two conflicting governments—a state agency and a government agency—there you are.

Here is a 1931 advertisement for the Bank Palace Club stating that they feature an electric Keno board, and yet you stated that the Palace Club had the first Keno game in the state in 1936. Can you explain this?

This goes back to when we closed the Palace upstairs, and they went downstairs here and they called it the Bank Palace Club.

And they were downstairs in—?

In the old Golden Hotel building right here on the corner of the alley. And, now, when they say we feature the only electric Keno board in Reno, they had a Bingo game in the back, and they called it Keno. And when they say they feature the only electric Keno board in Reno, they would light up the numbers on the board back there for the Bingo game. And they drew the numbers out of a little wooden goose. And then they would put the numbers up; and before, they used to put the numbers up and people—if they wanted to see them, they'd have to come and take a look, physically look at the little pellets that they took out of the goose. But now this electric Keno board—they would light up the numbers on the board. And it was the first Keno board in Reno. Now this was

Graham and McKay and Sullivan. That's when they closed up the place upstairs [the Palace Club], went downstairs; but it was the Bank Club. Eventually my dad opened up the Palace here, why then they called it the Bank Club, the old Bank Club. You got this what year?

Nineteen thirty-one.

Nineteen thirty-one, right. I think it was 1930 when they moved downstairs, when they moved out of here and went downstairs. Because I remember back in 1929 when they still had the club upstairs [Palace], and I think it was 1930. So they closed up upstairs, and they were still paying my dad rent, as you remember, and then they went downstairs and opened up the Bank Club. And they had the electric Keno board, that's correct. So that's where that came from. I'm glad you brought that out. I'd never seen that really or don't recollect it.

It was in a publicity publication that the airport people put out to win support for a new airport.

That's when they went from Blanch Field where the golf course is now, and—well, United Airlines wanted to build the airport over there. And United Airlines did build the airport there. They called it Hubbard Field—as a matter of fact the road that used to lead to it is still down there and still has the same name, Hubbard Lane. And United Airlines built the airport and sold it to the city of Reno at a later date.

This was called In the Air, Reno Municipal Airport Magazine. It mentioned Sam Frank, Tom White—

Sam Frank was the mayor at the time—used to have the old Grand Central Garage

on the corner of Liberty and Virginia Street. It was on the northeast corner of Liberty and Virginia where Security National Bank is now. Used to be a big garage there. As a matter of fact my dad used to keep his car there; and for thirty dollars a month, when he'd come home at night, the attendant would bring him home, bring the car back, put it in the garage, and in the morning he'd call for his car and they'd bring it to him. As a matter of fact, Myron Frank, his son, just died recently. They had the old Grand Central Garage and then they had the old Reno Garage here now where the telephone company is now. And then his sons, his stepsons, now own the First National Bank Parking Garage there; one is a lawyer (I went to school with him), George Folsom. They were Myron Frank's stepsons.

The sane publication mentioned Frank Cochran and Buzz Morrison, commercial pilots and instructors.

Buzz Morrison, Frank Cochran—I just remember the names. They were commercial pilots, and I think Cochran had something to do with the old Air Service Company, if I'm not mistaken.

How were slot machines in the thirties different than the ones we have today?

Oh, the slot machines in the thirties were very much different than the ones we have today. Of course you must remember that slot machines in those days were not regulated. And before gaming was legalized, why as I told you before slot machines were put on location, and of course the operator furnished the slot machine, the proprietor furnished the place, and they split the take fifty-fifty. And the slot machines in those days were, first they had the old Caille slot machines, the big

round dial in the middle; you'd put a coin in at the top and pull the coin down, then push a handle and the wheel would go around and it would stop on certain pays. And they weren't as liberal, of course, as they are today, a little tighter on the payoff, around seventy percent payoff and thirty percent for the house.

And then as time went on they came into the smaller slot machines. There was Caille and Mills—what's the other one? But the Cailles and the Mills were the two most prominent slot machines. And Bally was unknown of or unheard of in those days. Of course everything was mechanical; nothing was electronic in those days. The advent of electronic slot machines was with the old pinball games, and actually they didn't know in those days the electronics that they had in pinball games could be applied to a slot machine. The technology wasn't there because there was no payoffs with the pinball games, you know. They'd just click and make lights go on, so on and so forth. And of course it was all hard-wired as opposed to transistors and diodes and all that kind of stuff now.

But they were really very simple mechanically. And not up until I'd say 1934 or so, did they have say a fifty-cent machine; people didn't have money to play dollar slot machines in those days. Of course even on the gaming tables you could play "21" for a quarter. Oh, yes. People didn't have the money in those days to gamble big.

Jennings was the other big manufacturer of slot machines, but Mills was the most prominent slot machine and the most trouble free. And all of their payoffs were made mechanically, of course, through slides which—I still have some machines up here. And along came Pace; they built a slot machine which was a very good slot machine. Wasn't a good slot machine mechanically, but it got a lot of play. That's where Harold [Smith]

made all of his money when he first started out. He started out with those Pace machines, and people just took to them and they went like wildfire for some reason or other. I don't know why because mechanically they were just terrible to try to keep going. They were built very cheaply, and they'd break down all the time, but people liked them, so just fix them and let them keep on going. But even up to and including after the war, you didn't have any electronic slot machines for a long, long time. Let's see, Bally came out with the first electronic slot machine, well, it was in the early sixties, around '63 I think, '62, '63 when they first started to come out with the electronic slot machine, you know, the hoppers paying off instead of slide payoff and so on and so forth.

So slot machines per se remained about the same except for one thing. When they first built them years and years ago, they had what they called a ten-stop reel. They had a reel with twenty figures on it, but only ten of those figures could come up. And, oh, we operated those and they were legal insofar as—and even the big Caille slot machines with the round dial. Percentage was set by if you played the red or the black on the dial, why, then it was strictly let it fall where it may on the cog that you would see, the geared wheel around the front. But if you played a twenty-five cent payoff, why then there was a little lever that moved in towards the back and they had little prongs that would stick up, and it would only allow a certain number of those twenty-five cent payoffs to hit because if the bar would come down, it would kick it off. But this was not illegal per se because it was all figured into the percentage of the keep of the slot machine—in other words, the number of coins paid out. And if the person wanted to play twenty-five cent payoff or fifty cent payoff or a dollar payoff on the slot machine,

then this little cog would move in and keep the percentage of the machine static. As a matter of fact my dad told me one time that with the symbols on the wheel, he said he tried it just to see what would happen if you didn't have this cog come in. And it cost him about a hundred dollars to find out what would happen because the percentage went to the player, you see. But like I say, this was not illegal. That was no more illegal in those days than arranging the different symbols on the slot machines today to give the machine a certain percentage of keep, so whether you do it with lemons or if you have a different combination of different symbols. And, of course, the Mills people also came up with what they called a twenty-stop reel which stopped with every figure, and then you figured your percentage from that point as opposed to the ten-stop reel. The ten-stop reel was kind of flukey because it would stop so abruptly, you know, instead of letting it just come into its—well, you stop twenty symbols in ten stops, why you know it's going to stop right now. Whereas now with the twenty-stop reel, now they have twenty-five- and thirty-stop reels, and they have that many symbols on the reel.

But when the Gaming Commission came in they said, "No, we can't do this." Not because it was illegal, because the percentage was right, but whatever is on the reel must be able to show up. We don't care how tight your machine is, but whatever you symbolize must be able to show in the window on the payline. So at that time then, of course, they went to the twenty- and twenty-five- and thirty-stop reels, and then they figured their percentage from there. Of course percentages on slot machines now, today, run, oh, anywhere from ninety percent payoff to ninety-eight percent payoff. It all depends on—you have certain machines that are leaders, you know, and so on, and then others that—. But you can have

different percentages on your machines. The Gaming Commission does not care, just so that the symbols that you have on the reels will show on the payline. And that's the only difference in the slot machines.

Of course, now the electronic slot machine as opposed to the old mechanical slot machine, the mechanics of stopping the reels and everything are still the same. The only thing is that when the payoff comes, it comes out of a hopper instead of coming out of a slide arrangement which really isn't that—. Well, with the looser slot machine, if it gets on a paying streak more or less, well the hopper can hold more coins and you don't have to make what we call a tube fill to replenish the amount of money in there until the machine catches up with itself and keeps its percentage. So with the hopper you can hold more coins in there, and it's a little more trouble-free. They're very accurate on their payoffs and so on, and they're a lot less trouble than the old slide machines because the slides would wear out and they'd jam, and you'd have your little problems with them.

Also there was a problem of people being able to manufacture what they call a spoon and get up there and milk the machine. They'd get up under the slides and milk the coins out of that pay tube, you see. So the electronic machine, it's been able to eliminate that particular thing. But then of course we went into different things with electronics that we had to overcome, too, because people would—. While you're sleeping at night, you know, they're awake trying to figure out how to cheat the slot machines. And we found with some of our machines here it was the strangest thing in the world. Tell you a story about it.

We had these machines that were the mutation of the old Pace machine which went into the electronic. And they had a setup in there where when you put the coin in, why,

it would trip the machine with this solenoid and then you pull the handle. Well, the way they had it wired, strangely enough, one day I was walking around here, and of course, they hadn't hit Reno with it yet—. Fellow come up to me and he said, "I'm going to do you a favor, and it's going to cost you ten thousand dollars." He says, "Your machines can be beat," and he says, "I know how they can be beat, and if you want to find out how they can be beat, it's going to cost you ten thousand dollars." And he says, "You'll find out in the next few days," he says, "that you'll lose a lot more than ten thousand dollars."

I said, "All right." I said, "I have a partner I want to talk to—be down this afternoon." I said, "You meet me here at five o'clock."

"Okay, fine," he said, "I'll be back at five o'clock."

Well, strangely enough the thieves left me alone. They would rather have had the ten thousand dollars than get caught, you know, cheating machines. So, about three o'clock in the afternoon, I got a call from a friend of mine in Las Vegas. This was after I came back of course in '64. And Tommy Callahan, was in the Four Queens, he used to be in the Desert Inn, and I met him when I was in the Stardust and so on and so forth. Very nice person, called me up, he says, "Sil," he says, "you got those Pace electronics?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Well, I'll tell you something," he says, "check them right now," he says, "we caught them down here." He said, "As a matter of fact," he says, "I'm saving you ten thousand dollars."

I said, "How Tommy?"

He says, "We paid a guy ten thousand dollars to find out what it was, and," he says, "I'm saving you the ten thousand."

I said, "Thanks a lot." I said, "What is it?"

"The cleaner, Formula 409."

They would pour it down the receptacle of the slot machine. That would short out the wiring, and they could keep on pulling the handle.

So now when the guy came back at five o'clock, I said, "Formula 409?"

"Where'd you find out?"

I said, "Sorry, I can't tell you, but it's Formula 409."

So we immediately had to rewire these machines so that when they would pour the Formula 409 down into the coin chute, it would short out and burn it away, you see. It would cause a short as opposed to tripping the machine, and it would burn the Formula 409 away and that solved the problem. But I saved ten thousand dollars because I would have paid the guy to find out. I never even found out his name. But he just turned around and walked out of the place.

I imagine he was afraid you would call the police.

No, no, no. No, there's a certain protocol that you don't holler policeman right away the minute somebody comes in and says something because the police don't know what it is. So let's find out what it is and we go from there. Well, that was one incident about slot machines and what can be done electronically.

But of course when I told you about this spoon—and you have to understand the mechanics of a slot machine—but in the pay chute, if you go up through the chute there, there's what we call the slides. And they have built anti-spooning devices, but they also in turn built another device that would pull the anti-spooning device forward and then they would go on up. And what they would do is get into the machine. They would find a machine that somebody left with a pay on it,

you see; then they would get up there and get this, what you called a spoon, an object with a kind of a horseshoe cup on it. And they would go up in the pay chute, and it would fit up inside of the slide. Then they would pull the slide forward, more coins would fall into the slide, then they'd let it back because it was on a pay, and they'd just keep sliding it back and forth and milking the whole tube dry.

So now we assume that we have the machines pretty well protected. However, the only way that you can actually protect a slot machine, and you can quote me on this, is if you put the slot machine in a glass-enclosed room and allow somebody to drop their coin in from maybe a twenty foot distance and watch it roll down in there, trip the machine, and then let something mechanical pull the handle, a solenoid or something pull the handle, and then you may have the machine protected.

And you know, sometimes a person gets very hardheaded, and they don't believe something even when it's shown to them; but strangely enough there was what they call the rhythm system. This came in in the fifties with the old mechanical machines, Mills, Jennings, whatever. And there's no way in the world that you could make me believe that somebody could take a slot machine and what they would do is go by rhythm. They'd feed a coin and pull the handle, feed a coin then pull the handle, feed a coin then pull the handle until they got the reels going at the same speed. They'd pull the handle at the same time all the time, and they'd get the reels to where they could manipulate them to the point of where they would pay out jackpots. And they'd always come back to the same symbols. And there's no way in the world that you could make me believe this until I saw it. And people came into Vegas with holes in their jeans, and they went out driving Cadillacs, believe this.

And strangely enough, the person that showed me that it could be done was a fellow by the name of Jay VanderMark. Your eyes are going to open up real good. He used to come in the El Rancho and play a dollar slot machine. (Incidentally, I was in charge of the slot machines at that time at the El Rancho along with my "21" dealing itself which we'll get to at a later date, but we're talking about slot machines now.) So Jay would come in and play this dollar slot machine, and of course he would beat it all the time. So I went up to him one day, and I said, "I don't know you, but," I said, "I'd just as soon you didn't come in here any more." I said, "I don't know what you're doing."

He said, "Well, as long as you're throwing me out," he says, "I've known you for a long time." And he mentioned some people that knew me that he knew and so on. And, "Let me show you something."

So he showed me how he could rhythm play this slot machine and empty it out.

And I said, "You know, Jay," I said, "I didn't believe it until I saw it."

And he said, "You know, I've clocked this machine, and I know how—." He says, "You tried to beat me," he says, "by changing the symbols around on the slot machine."

I said, "That's right."

He said, "Well, if you had changed this one symbol over here," he said, "you would've, but," he says, "you didn't know." He says, "Now I'm telling you," he says, "what to do with the machine."

But then—now comes the clincher—Jay VanderMark is the fellow that was put in charge of the slot machines at the Stardust that pilfered over four million dollars. Evidently they thought that it they put—he's probably one of the best slot machine thieves in the whole United States—and they figured if they put him in charge of the slot machines that

they'd be protected. But I mean it's common knowledge that the man took off, and the Gaming Commission was investigating, you know, and they read about it in the papers. Well, Jay is the guy. And he went legitimate for awhile, and quite a character you know—old, drawl talk, had a hearing aid and so on. And he'd give you this [a wide-eyed innocent look], you know, all that, but he was quite a character. But like I say, he became my friend later on, and he showed me a lot of things.

So at that time we had to figure out something to combat this rhythm playing. So we came to what we call a variator. Any mechanical device for a slot machine when you pull the handle, it has to fall into sequence, first reel, second reel, third reel, then the fingers have to go through for the payoffs; and there's another little clicker that comes back up the slides to let them go through. So this is all mechanical. It would take a month to try to explain the whole thing properly.

But anyway what we did was—they had a governor that would allow everything mechanical in the machine to go at a certain pace back and allow each sequence to happen through what we call a timing bar. The governor was on this timing bar, and as the bar made its half circle, as it were, well, that had notches in it and would allow the first reel to come off the notch and stop, the second, and so on, then your payoffs and all that kind of stuff. So, what we did was put a variator on when the machine would be played; then you had a little knob, an eccentric knob, or sometimes we'd have a hexagon with different lengths of throw for this timing bar, and it would click over one little notch every time. So one pull of the handle you might get a long spin of the reel, and the next pull of the handle you'd get a short one and it'd go boom, boom, boom, boom, and the next one would go boom, boom, boom. So we varied

the plays on the clock each time the handle was pulled. And that worked out pretty good. It eliminated the rhythm players to a point.

Then they got ideas where they could put magnets on there and stop the bar. See it's got a little fan. So then we had to go to, instead of a steel fan, an aluminum little fan on the governor to go around, so that it couldn't be stopped. But they went to the aluminum one, but they had little steel weights on there, and they could still stop the clock. So then we had to go to the stainless steel weights which [were] non-magnetized or lead weights and stainless steel reels to hold it on there. So we got that done. Then pretty soon they'd start drilling the machines. They have little drills that they put on, and they drill right through the center of the machine and then they put a little wire in there to stop the clock, or short out something and make the machine empty the hopper.

So to combat that you put stainless sides inside of the case, but you don't put them tight onto the case because they've got drills that'll go through that. You leave the stainless steel loose, so when the drill hits it, the stainless steel'll go that way and the drill will just go alongside.

Then you have to put anti-stringing devices on the coin acceptors. What happens is they put a coin in there with a string, and then they get down and trip it and then they pull it back up again, you see, and trip it again, and pull it back up and trip it again. So now we have a string cutter on there, so when they put the coin they'll get one play. And then when they pull it back up, this little knife comes out and cuts the string. But these are the things—the different things that people do to try to cheat a slot machine. So I guess that's about it on slot machines. Anything else you want?

What were your defenses against the spooners?

Well, if we could catch them—and of course those days are gone forever too—take them outside and beat the living hell out of them, then arrest them and throw them in jail. That was the way you coped with them in those days. It was very effective.

I'm sure it was.

Yes, very effective. And now I've heard—I've never seen it done, but way back before my time, say, early twenties or so when they had gaming and stuff and somebody'd come in and try to cheat a "21" game or something, take them downstairs and put their fingers in a vice and break their fingers. It stopped it. It was the only thing they knew at the time to stop it, you know. But if you go back I think into history—I'm trying to remember now where I read about it—where if a person was a thief or something, they would mangle his hands or something and he was known then. He was known as a thief. That was his punishment. They would mangle his hands, so he could never use them for any sleight of hand or legerdemain of any kind any more. But, you know, it's like in the old days when they used to put them in the stockades, in the old stocks and so on for punishment. But that was their form of punishment in those days and it was accepted. And the thief knew that if he got caught, that was what was going to happen to him.

Of course, you know catching them is one thing because they always had you pretty well pegged as to where you were and so on. Because when they'd use a spoon or something they'd have an accomplice watching out for anybody in authority in the place that might be coming around a post or something, and they'd, you know, they'd have a coat or something, hide the spoon right away and just play the machine

legitimately. So they were very hard to catch. But eventually you'd catch them.

Usually, again I have to say this, your best stool pigeon is a customer. I'll tell you why. Psychologically, if you were sitting at a "21" game, and you saw somebody doing something nefarious, now, and he was winning and you were losing your money, and you saw that he was doing something that wasn't right, and psychologically you say, "Well, why should I stay here and lose my money when he's doing this to them?"

Pretty soon you'll go and tell somebody in authority, that man is doing this or that or the other thing. And you'd be surprised how many people we catch that way, just by the customer. But it's not so much that the customer wants to do you the favor. It's his avariciousness because he doesn't like this other guy winning by cheating where he's losing his money, you see what I mean? In other words, he's not getting something for nothing; he's going to see to it that guy doesn't get something for nothing. But this is psychological with the person who gambles, or many times the stores get—they'll never catch a shoplifter. But maybe some customer, a legitimate customer, that thinks it's wrong for something like that to happen will go and tell the store manager, this person stole this item or whatever. And it's happened as you know. So it's like I say, your best stool pigeon is your customer.

Now, description of the Palace Club during the years 1930 to '34. Well, in 1930 the Palace Club had a little soft drink counter on the corner up here, on the corner of Commercial Row and Center Street. And then it was a big dry goods store facing Center Street. They called it Aaron's I believe, Dry Goods Store. And then they had a little barber shop down there on the corner of the alley and the stairs going upstairs to what was the gaming house which was the original Palace

Club, then subsequently closed down and had the Bank Club there.

Then the Volstead Act was repealed, Roosevelt came in— had beer and so on and so forth. At that time my dad took over their little soft drink stand and there was a bar in there really, but it was a soft drink bar. And he took that over and opened a bar and two or three games and the original Palace Club and restaurant on this site—he remodeled the whole club. But he was able before that to pick up these two buildings here which I was showing you that were different levels. And when he did that then he remodeled, tore all these buildings down; 1934, these two other buildings here [west of the original building] were rebuilt, and he put a hotel upstairs, one-story hotel with thirty-two rooms in it.

And as business got better, he took the restaurant out and made the gaming part which you see now, the gaming tables and so on; he enlarged that restaurant and went from Commercial Row to Douglas Alley. And he eventually was able to tear down the brick wall [that] separated these buildings. See the old Palace building was just one brick wall way up, and what the contractor, which was Walker-Boudwin Construction Company, did in those days would be prohibitive in expense now. They needled into the brick the big timbers that come out and then put uprights to hold all the brick up above. Then they tore all the brick out underneath and put steel beams in. They did all that for about ten thousand dollars. Today it would cost upwards of two hundred thousand to even think about doing it.

So he did that and then on this [the south] side of the casino he put a horsebook, racehorse book. And this went along real good until about 1943, of course, when he leased the place out. And then later on, the legislature or the Gaming Control Board

passed a regulation that they couldn't have a horsebook in a gambling house. And they just reversed their decision on that not too long ago; I think it was last year. So at that time all the horsebooks went out [of] the gaming establishments, and there was some controversy as to people being able to call bets out on the telephone and so on and so forth. So they had horsebooks without any telephones in them or anything; just telephones for the business itself, no pay phones, nothing. And they just reversed themselves now, and they allow horsebooks again in gaming establishments. But that's about the way it went until I left in '43.

And as far as arrangements with Graham-McKay concerning the Bank Club, there were no arrangements per se about the Bank Club, but the arrangements were when they dissolved partnership. They didn't really dissolve partnership; my dad still had the slot machines, you know, on a fifty-fifty basis with these people, Cal-Neva and here. And I think we discussed that in a previous interview. They paid him, I think, at that time, two hundred and fifty dollars a month not to lease out the upstairs for any gaming; then there was no competition. And that was the arrangement that they had, and of course in those days two hundred and fifty dollars a month was a good rental. Of course when he put the gaming in the Palace Club downstairs and built the hotel upstairs, of course that arrangement went out the window. And that's when he lost the fifty percent of the slot machines with the Bank Club. But, you know, as we talked before, it would have happened anyway because the minute gaming became legal, why, the slot machine operator had nothing to offer insofar as protection or anything else. So everybody started buying their own slot machines. We have operators now with routes and stuff, but these routes again are—the operator that helps

the guy get started and so on and so forth; then he has a contract for a certain length of time to keep his slot machines in there until the debt is paid off and so on, you see. So, but you can't blame people. I mean why give somebody fifty percent of something for nothing, you know, which is in effect what it is. Of course a lot of people can't afford to buy the slot machines and so on, pay the taxes, the original taxes to start with, so they give them a year operating in their establishment and then they eventually buy their own anyway. That was the situation there.

Then the Palace Club went along and did its little thing just like it always has. It's not been a big money maker, and yet it affords a real good living for anybody, you know, that operates it. And it's tied in now to where it can't expand. The only way it can go is up, and in order for it to go up, why it would take a lot of structural work. As a matter of fact, if somebody were going to build a motel here on this side [south] right now, it might be better just to tear the whole darn thing down and start from scratch. It might be a lot cheaper than trying to bolster the thing and start putting steel in. I've had mixed emotions about that. Then of course you tear it down, you close down, then you have to start all over again. So, when you have a going business, you know, you have mixed emotions about which way to go.

The political [aspect of life in this period], of course, was—in the gaining business you didn't, and I still hold to that, a politician can't do an awful lot for you or to you in this business. I would never consider asking one for a favor of any kind, nor would I imagine they would come and ask me for any favors of any kind because, as you've seen by the papers lately, they get their nose stuck into everything and every aspect of any person's life and every facet of your life, so really the gaming law's a

good one. And you go along and mind your own business and in our vernacular, keep your nose clean, why what can they do for you or to you? You know. So, that's about it as far as the political—.

Now the economic—Reno's had its ups and downs as far as its economy is concerned, but not to any radical point such as the East where they've had the depressions and so on and so forth. During the Depression, business was slow, but Reno never really felt the Depression like having soup kitchens and this, that, and the other thing. And then of course when Roosevelt came in, he put in the WPA and so on, and that bolstered the economy quite a bit around here. And then in '36, I believe, they voted the veterans—well, they voted the veterans' bonus in 1935 and paid it in 1936. And that really bolstered the economy here for during that year. And then from '36 on 'til '43, why it was just normal routine business. And of course when the war started, I went in the Army, and I understand they closed the places down at midnight, and then reopened them again at eight o'clock in the morning or nine o'clock, whatever; they ran actually two shifts. And I understand that during the war [World War II] business was real good, and directly after the war business was real good.

Why did they close them down at midnight?

You know it's the old story. They started Stead Air Force Base out there, and of course there wasn't any defense work here in town to speak of. But I guess they figured for the military and so on and so forth, they should close them down. It's just like they closed the old "line" down here— the houses of prostitution. The military comes in and they'll say, "Well, we'll declare the town off limits if you don't do this or don't do that." So if they

didn't close up the old Bullpen down there, why they were going to declare the town off limits.

Well, I say, who gives a damn? It was going along fine the way it was before, so why do you need the military to come in here to try to run your town for you? But you know you get these old deals about the soldier would go back and say he was rolled during the night and this and that and the other thing, and lost his money, and some girl got his money or something. And so in order to keep peace, I guess this is what happened. Of course, I saw it happen all over, you know, many other parts of the country, too. Some parts of towns were off limits to the military personnel, and o on and so forth, which I guess they had to have rules for everybody. When I was in the service I never got in any trouble, but I didn't go looking for any either; to thine own self be true, as it were. But it was really comical, but that's what happened, you know, the do-gooders, which is fine, but doesn't really work in a town like Reno. But that's what happened. I wasn't here at the time; I was away in the Army somewhere else. Before I went in the Army, why everything was wide open. It was after I left that they closed them down at midnight and so on.

Who ran the Bullpen?

Graham-McKay. They also had slot machines down there. Down at the end they had a sort of a horseshoe affair, and they had a dance floor and bar and stuff. Just run like a regular business.

Now the early games in Reno were of course the same old games of Roulette, "21," Craps, as we call it, or dice games, and the old Wheel of Fortune; we called it the Big Six Wheel. I don't know why they called it the Big Six— something I've always wondered, but

we call it the Wheel of Fortune now. And the other game that was very prevalent in Reno was Faro Bank. And Faro Bank was probably the most even game—I say even, in that the percentage for the house and the customer are very, very close. And it got quite a play, but it was a very complicated game. I guess I’m one of the few people left—I notice in the paper one day Warren Nelson said that he was the only one left that could deal Faro Bank. He’s wrong because there’s myself and my brother-in-law that can still deal the game very, very well as a matter of fact, I might say.

But anyway, Faro Bank was quite a game except that it was a game that was very easy for the dealer to cheat with. And that was for or against the house. And in those days there were—well, the Bank Club had two games and we had two games here. And insofar as the clubs were concerned, they were run very honestly. However, we were able to—I don’t know about the Bank Club—but I can say for ourselves here, we were able to detect many times when the dealer was what shall we say, shuffling up a deal for the customer and then split the take later. And of course those people didn’t work too long, but it happened. And eventually Faro Bank because of the protection that it needed and the cost of running the game—it was a very complicated game, and it needed two dealers at all times, and also what they call a casekeeper who kept track of all the cards as they came out. And they would have a what they call the dealer and the lookout. Then they would work a half an hour on the chair and a half an hour dealing. So it was very complicated; you know it was very mentally trying. But because of the fact that it was such an even game for the customer and because of the fact that it was difficult to protect, why it eventually went on out—went by the wayside. And today, I mean, you’d be very hard put to find even a

customer that would know how to play it or would play it. As a matter of fact, we put it in the Stardust Hotel in Vegas when I was casino manager there, and of course, I was the only one down there that knew anything about Faro Bank. And they asked me if I could set it up for them. I said, “Yes, I can set it up for you.

And they said, “Well, you don’t seem too enthusiastic about it.”

I said, “No, I’m not.” I said, “I wouldn’t deal it with counterfeit money!”

“Oh, well. Go ahead and set it up.

So I set it up for them, and they don’t have it any more. They changed their mind real quick. And I went through several different methods of protecting it that I didn’t know when we were here. We had a big what we call a wheel with little pockets in it, had several decks of cards all the way around. And the minute they’d get through one deal, one deck of cards, they would take that deck of cards and put it back on the wheel and then turn the wheel over and pick out a deck at random, and start a new deal; so that they could never reshuffle the old deck that they’d just dealt out.

And the methods of operations in the gaming business has changed not in the operation of the game, but it’s changed in the rapport that you have between the casino personnel and the customer. Back in the old days in the thirties, it was sort of a dog eat dog affair, you know. You’d come in, and you were trying to beat me out of something and I’m watching you to make sure you don’t and all that kind of thing. And this changed completely, because after all, the customer is the person who comes in here and pays your—what we again call in the vernacular, the nut. The nut is the expenses, the wages. And everyone of these places has a nut that has to be cracked. And that’s what we call making the wherewithal of paying your expenses, your wages and your taxes and so

on and so forth. That's what we call cracking the nut. But, it's changed quite a bit because now—. I remember back in the thirties if a person from Los Angeles would want to come in here and cash a check, nobody bothered to check out his credit or anything else. *No! Period.* Immediately he was trying to give you a bum check, you know. But those things have changed in that we have elaborate credit systems now, and basically the people who come to gamble in Reno or Las Vegas are honest in that your percentage of losses on bad checks—we always check it out and we find that it's not high enough which means that we're not cashing enough checks. And this is what's changed insofar as the method of operation.

And, of course, you have your big shows now and things to entice people, and everybody has a gimmick to entice somebody into their place. Mine, I don't have any entertainment or anything so it happens to be my food which I suffer a loss on every year. If you have a show, it costs you so much money to put that show on. And the shows don't break even for the casino or the establishment because the cost of putting that show on; you're not going to make it on the food you serve in the showroom or the liquor. So the casino has to absorb whatever the loss is. Consequently if you lose on food or you lose on the entertainment or whatever it is, there're certain aspects of the business where you must suffer a loss in order to entice people into your establishment. And that's again another method of operation that has changed.

Now—I've told you about the different methods—changes in the operation. And what are the, well, changes? I say the advent of the hotels and stuff, and like Vegas grew up and—. Strange thing, the guy that started Vegas was a man by the name of Tom Hull, out of California. And his idea was that between Los

Angeles and Salt Lake there was no place for a person to stop (and this was fact you know in the late thirties and early forties), to rest or stay overnight or anything like that. So at that time he built the old El Rancho Hotel, and that was the start of the Las Vegas Strip. I think he built it in 1940, somewhere in there. And then eventually the government built some cottages around the old El Rancho. I don't know if you ever saw it or not before it burned down. They built some cottages around the El Rancho on that land and then sold them back to the El Rancho Hotel for a dollar apiece after the war was over. But they used them for recreation for the military personnel when they came back from overseas, or when they were on a R and R program. But that was the start of the Strip in Las Vegas.

* * * * *

When my dad took that brick wall down there between the buildings, why he wanted to open a horsebook. And [there was] a fellow by the name of Poncia, Jerry Poncia, who had the exclusive what we called the wire; it was the wire service coming in from back East that gave you all of the track odds, plus the description of the races and so on. And without that, you're pretty hard put to run a horsebook because what they could do is go ahead and take their own bets. They would know when the race was run, and they could hold up the information for a while and send somebody over here to make a bet on the horse that already won. That's what you call getting past-posted. And it was a very difficult thing to do. I mean to run a horsebook that way, so my dad asked for the—of course this was after they had split up with the slot machine department, so on and so forth—my dad went over and asked if he could have the service over here. And, of course, they

didn't want any competition. See, this was Reno in those days. Competition was bad for business. Now competition only breeds more business. But these people didn't realize those things in those days. If they had something exclusively, why they wanted to keep it in their little pocket; and if they had gone ahead and given the horse service, the wire service, to my dad, all it did was increase horse players, you know. It's the old story in the gaming business, if you're not lucky one place, you'll go to another.

But they didn't see it that way and didn't see eye to eye, so at that time if you tried to run it without the wire service, you know, which was a very difficult thing to do because they had to just more or less—when they got the post time which you know can vary five or ten minutes, why my dad would have to close it up five minutes before what was known to be post time. You just have to close it, not take bets five minutes prior because he knew that if he didn't, he had to get past-posted because they'd release that information. So as a matter of fact, I remember a story one time where somebody had tapped into the telephone wires in the alley. In those days they had all the telephone wires up above, you know, on telephone poles, and somebody tapped into the telephone wires that went into the Bank Club. They'd get the information, hold it up, and then go ahead. It came in on a telegraph key at the time. We used to hire telegraphers from the Southern Pacific or the Western Union, you know, that could read the Morse code. It was quite interesting. I'm glad you brought that up, and it brings back old memories.

Well, anyway, they cut into the telephone wires, and they would get all the information, go make their bets. And then they would have their own telegraph key, and they'd go on and telegraph whatever came in, back into

the Bank Club. And they couldn't understand what was happening to them, and finally they found out where the wires were tapped into upstairs in a room someplace, on the telephone wires. And, of course, when that was discovered, that was the end of that.

But anyway, when they wouldn't give my dad the service (of course horsebooks in those days were illegal), my dad went again to Carson City. I don't know who he went to; I recall the fact that he went. And he just laid it flat on the line and said, "Either I get the wire service for the Palace Club, or you can close up every horsebook in town, period. It's going to be that."

The next day he had his service because, again, offtrack betting is in effect considered a lottery. And it was kind of a touchy situation, but I recall when it happened he didn't back down one inch. He says, "I either get the service or you close it up in the Bank Club, one or the other."

I think it was federal because it was on account of the wire transmitting information interstate. And he said, "Okay, they're allowing it which is fine, but I want it. Now, if you're not going to let me have it, then let's stop it from coming into the state altogether because that's the way it's going to be." And he had the wire the next day. So that's how we came to a share of the off-track horsebook.

Before gaming was legalized, were the gaming establishments ever raided?

Not the gaming. Oh no, gaming was never bothered. It was condoned, and no, not to my knowledge that I can remember was ever a gaming establishment closed up. It was always open, you know; like when they had the gaming upstairs in the Palace, you just go up the stairs—I mean the doors were open. Nobody bothered anybody about it. It was condoned, and there

was no—of course it could have been stopped and closed up at any time, you know, by—. But the mayors and the chief of police, they never bothered anybody. It was an accepted thing in the town. I mean the town was always known as a wide-open town, and nobody—of course, everybody or anybody couldn't come into the town and just open up a gambling business, you know. It had to be townspeople; it had to be people that were known, and always respected people of the community. I mean nobody ever looked down on them or anything. It was a way of life in those days, and everybody accepted it. I was proud to be the son of the "Slot Machine King of Reno," you might say, very proud to be. And my dad was very well respected in the town, and my mother was very well respected. There were never any qualms as to who we were or what my dad did, just an acceptance of a way of life. But, no, the gaming houses were never closed down to my knowledge, and they operated and flourished and then of course they legalized it.

Well, I think there was a little pressure brought to bear insofar as—well, Nevada wasn't the healthiest state economically in those days, as we all know. The mining had become a thing of the past more or less. And this area, of course the southern part of the state, and all of the cow counties—as we call them now—why, they were mostly farming. Las Vegas didn't come into being until they started building the Hoover Dam, or Boulder Dam as they call it, so it was just a stop in the road more or less. And when they started to build the dam down there, why the only club they had was the old Boulder Club, and it flourished. And then, of course, the Pioneer Club opened up and this was in the forties, the early forties.

And the forerunner of gaming in Las Vegas was the El Rancho Hotel. I mean, you know, big time gaming was the El Rancho

Hotel. Tommy Hull came through there from Los Angeles on his way to Salt Lake one time, and he just thought to himself this would be a beautiful place to have a layover, you know, because in those days cars didn't go as fast or as far in the early forties, gas rationing and so on during the war. So he built the El Rancho, I believe, in 1941. And Las Vegas was a watering hole more or less. Of course they'd built Boulder Dam and some of the smaller clubs had opened up downtown, but gaming didn't flourish in Las Vegas at all. Reno was the town until the advent of the El Rancho, then the Frontier opened up in 1947—.

But none of the places [in Reno before 1931] were ever closed. And then, of course, gaming in those days—like I say, my dad was one of a delegation that went to Carson City to get gaming put on the ballot because there was pressure to be able to get licenses, you know, not tax it as it's taxed today, but to be able to—it was here; it was flourishing, so they figured why not get something out of it? Legalize it and get something out of it because as it was then they were getting nothing from it, you know. So they legalized gaming, and that was it.

Bud Young used to come over (our sheriff here for many, many years, retired now). He was a deputy when I first met him, deputy sheriff. And he was on the tax collection for the county and licenses for the machines, slot machines and gaming tables and so on. In those days if you had twenty or twenty-five slot machines, which was a lot of slot machines then, why they'd give you one or two slot machines free of tax. It was a way of life. In other words if you have so many machines, why you get two of them free—you don't have to pay any tax on them. And that was the advent of legalized gaming.

Then you still had no protection whatsoever (and you still don't) insofar as

checks are concerned, bad checks and so forth. Now in these days in time, we figure if we have three percent of the checks we cash turn out bad, why we're doing good. That's right. See, a gaming debt through federal law is not collectable. It goes back to the old [Queen Anne's law], English jurisprudence, that a gaming debt is not collectable. So, consequently, any time that a check is cashed in a gaming establishment, the customer is more or less on his honor. Some have been known to stop checks, stop payment on it, and there's no way you can collect them in the court. Of course, if he ever comes back to Reno, then you can have him arrested for passing bad paper within the state, but even then if he carries it to the federal court, why they'll throw it out. So it's really a question of honor with people. Of course, if they want to keep coming back, why they have to make their checks good. But some people just don't, that's all. Of course, we have a line on them, and if they come back and play they bring cash. They never cash another check for them.

And now, of course, we have a thing called Central Credit where we have a line on everybody that has credit anyplace in the state of Nevada. And if a person wants to cash a check, why the first thing you do is call Central Credit and ask if they have a line on this person. And it's just like, you know, the department stores and your Mastercharge cards and Visa and all that have credit ratings on people. And (this is within the state of course) a person might have credit, you know, of, we'll say, ten thousand dollars at Harrah's. Well, he can come over here and make out a ten thousand dollar card here, and then go to another place and make out a ten thousand dollar card there. Well, pretty soon this fellow has fifty thousand dollars worth of credit, but he's only good for ten. So when they come up and want to cash, why, then we call Central

Credit and find out if he's cashing checks anyplace else; and if he has, why then you just hold him to his limit. In other words, if he's cashed five thousand at Harrah's, then he can get five thousand here. Or if he's cashed eight thousand dollars around, then he can only get two. But before the advent of Central Credit, why, we had a problem with people because if they had a five thousand dollar card and wanted to cash a check for five thousand, you cash it; and they might have cashed five thousand five different places. And then nobody would get paid, or maybe one guy would get paid if he got his check in there quick enough.

In the old days I used to have to make trips to Sacramento, here, there and the other place with the checks and be there first in line when the bank opened in the morning, because some people, you know, you just had a feeling they would stop payment. And you'd get in there and cash the check. Then the guy would get in there and call you up and just raise seven kinds of hell with you. "What's the idea of putting that check through that bank like that?"

"Just the very fact that I knew you were going to stop payment on it, that's why I did it."

"Well, you shouldn't have done that to me."

I said, "What were you going to do to me?" Simple as that really. Of course, in those days, you know, a dollar was a dollar; it was dog eat dog. If you won a hundred dollars, you'd better get the hundred dollars, otherwise you didn't exist. So—ask me something else.

Which is the correct term, gaming or gambling, or what is the difference?

There is no difference. They're one and the same. Gaming and gambling, when you gamble you make a wager, right? It's a gaming

establishment where they have the games where you can make the gambling wager. In other words, you could call it a gambling house because that's where people can gamble. You see, when you say gamble or gaming, the customer is the one who's gambling because the house has a certain percentage that they deal to or deal with, so they're really not gambling. At the end of the year they're going to keep the percentage, but the customer is the gambler. He's the one that comes up and does the gambling because he's gambling that he can beat your odds. So it can be a gaming establishment where a customer comes in to gamble or it can be a gambling establishment. But the two terms are synonymous. There is no difference really other than what I just explained to you that the customer is the gambler. I'm not a gambler; I'm in the gambling business or the gaming business, but I'm not a gambler because I'm not a player. The player is the gambler. Got it?

Okay.

When you go and play a slot machine, you're gambling against the odds, are you not? Okay. So it's not a game of skill, but I will say one thing now, that Blackjack or "21" (with them the two names are synonymous) is not a game of chance any more. It's a game of skill, and we in the gaming business have to become more skillful than the person who is playing, and the reason for that is the advent of the counting system on cards. You've heard of this no doubt.

A fellow by the name of Thorp started it. There are people that started it much before him—fellow by the name of Manny Kimmel down in Las Vegas, Joe Bernstein, two of the greatest counters of all time. Another young fellow— something "Kid" they called him, the Kid. But these people were counting cards

on one game, and we were not allowing them to play "21" because of their expertise in being able to remember cards and throw the percentage in their favor. So "21" is no longer a game of chance; [it's] a game of skill.

And then Thorp wrote a book on counting cards. He went through a computer and refined the system. But the basic system that Bernstein and Manny Kimmel played and this young fellow were—they figured out in their mind what Thorp went through a computer with and refined. And you can actually throw the percentage over to your side. So the only thing that we have to combat that is either dealing out of a four-deck shoe or a six-deck shoe such as we deal some of our games up here, because a person would really have to have a very photographic memory, ultra-photographic, to remember all of the cards in a six-deck shoe or a four-deck shoe. Whereas with one deck, after the first deal that you make around the table, they've got you. So if you have a full table, you just deal once and shuffle the cards period. Because if you don't, they know exactly what cards were out, and they go on and play it accordingly to what cards are left in and what they can see. So that the more people that are playing the better, because then they can see all of the hands and see what cards have already come out while the people are playing because you know people play, and they just hold their hand out and so on and so forth. So, on the second round they know exactly what to do. These are some of the things that we have to combat in the gaming business, and strangely enough our Gaming Commission, the Gaming Control Board does nothing to help us. We're on our own.

And, we have with us some lawsuits now with the Civil Liberties Union where people have been asked to leave and not play, and they're suing now and possibly rightly so

because they're not cheating per se. Because you can't bar a man for what he's thinking; and he's not manipulating the cards, he's not bending the cards, he's not marking the cards in any way, shape, or form. All he's doing is remembering in his mind the cards that came up. So now it's a public establishment and it's quite a law as to whether you can bar this man from playing or not. Now they're suing some of the places down in Vegas. How far they're going to get with that I don't know. The Gaming Control Board says, "Go ahead, throw them out." Of course, the best defense is to break the deck down and reshuffle. But it's going to be very interesting to find out how this is going to be resolved if it's ever going to be resolved in the courts, because it's going to the courts; there's no question about it. The lawsuits have already been filed, so—.

The Gaming Control Board says, "Go ahead and throw them out, but they won't back you up in throwing them out?"

Well no, then they sue you civilly for throwing them out. And they [the gaming authorities] were considering one time making every establishment deal with shoes, the four decks or six decks, whatever, you know. Of course, Las Vegas got the message a long time ago, and most of their establishments deal out of shoes. But up here in Reno, Harrah and Cal-Neva, couple other places didn't want it; they want to deal out of the hand and take their chances. So the Gaming Commission decided to let them go ahead and make it optional whether you deal with shoes or not. Well, there's no such thing as being optional about it because if you're competing with these people, you have to go along with what they're doing. So what they don't realize is the different percentage that the game would hold if they dealt out of

shoes. In other words, they wouldn't have to worry about it. And my point to the Gaming Commission was, well, the shoe will hold between five and six percent more for the house than a hand-held deck, and you're not taking all this time to break in the deck and reshuffling all the time and so on and so forth. So, probably if everybody dealt out of shoes, why, it would be six percent more in gross win. And I asked them—it's a matter of record—I said, "Don't you people want this extra tax?" Evidently they didn't.

So I just did like the little Arab did and politely folded my tent and walked away. But sometimes, you know, the biggest people in the world are the most stupid when it comes to—well, I'll have to give credit to this; they have so much business that it doesn't make that much difference.

Life in Reno in the thirties was real nice. I enjoyed it. And, of course, I was John Petricciani's son and I had inroads in many, many places. And I was well liked. My dad, of course, was well liked in the community. And the whole family was, and it was a small town at the time. And everybody knew everybody, and life was real nice. We used to go into school, go to the school dances. I went to the old Northside Junior High School which is now Harolds' parking lot over here. I went there one semester and I finished out (a little nostalgia) —at Billingshurst Junior High School that was just torn down. I was one of the first students at Billingshurst Junior High School for the second semester when it was built, and graduated from there and then went to the old Reno High School which was torn down over here on West Street. And that was the only high school in the town at the time.

I'll say one thing about life in Reno from the time I can remember until through today—Reno is a nice town, it's a good town, and when I look around the rest of the country

and see what's happened to it—of course, I don't know what's going to happen to Reno in the future—but we still have the good old clean air. We have more or less of our four seasons. We don't have the brutal weather that the rest of the country has. And I think anybody who was fortunate enough to have lived in Reno all of their life or the state of Nevada for that matter, because I enjoyed my life in Vegas also, very, very much—and I'll say anybody that was fortunate enough to be born and raised in the state of Nevada and lived their life here, is very, very fortunate indeed, because I've traveled all over the United States, and I've seen many, many towns. Take your big cities like New York, Los Angeles, and New Jersey—the state of New Jersey—places like that, why it makes you really feel fortunate that you were able to live in a town where you don't have to commute two hours to work. Where I live now, why I get in my car, and I'm down to my place of business in five minutes. And I live four miles away in a nice residential district; and I'm very, very happy in Reno. Of course, I expect to live my remaining life here. I expect to enjoy it just as much as I've enjoyed previous years. That's about all I can say.

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I'll get back to flying for a few minutes, but my motives for learning to fly—I think it has to be more or less born in you because strangely enough I've met many young people that have—my stepson, for instance, who's had one of the most beautiful opportunities in the world to learn to fly and doesn't care for it at all. And I guess it just has to be an inborn thing that you must want to—well, I have to go back to the poem "High Flight." And the first line is, "Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth..." It's being able to do something that nobody else has done, or what

I [mean to] say that so many people never do in their lifetime. And it's an inspiration, it's a joy. I just don't have enough enthusiasm for flying—it's something that you're in command of—something that nobody can help you—nobody can—it's your decision. You're up there, and if you get back down, it's nobody's fault but your own—not fault—but it's your decision. Everything about it is just beautiful. There's a certain camaraderie amongst fliers where they will share their experiences and teach you what they know. If a flier has been in trouble of some kind, and you ask him about it, he won't shun you; he'll tell you exactly what trouble he was in, how he was in it, how he got out of it. And a flier will learn by another person's experience, where people, the earthlings you might call them, they won't. In other words you can tell somebody something, and they'll say, "Well maybe he knows, maybe he doesn't, and I'll go and do it my way." Then they have to fall in the pit themselves, but not so with flying. You listen and you learn, and if somebody tells you this is the way it is, you accept that because this man has been through it and he's still alive. You see, you don't get a second chance there; so if this guy did it and he did it right, why then by all means let's everybody do it that same way. But motive for learning to fly, I just plain wanted to fly; that's all. I "slipped the surly bonds of earth."

I've had many, many instructors; and I've learned a little something from each one of them. And I only wish that I had all of the knowledge of all the instructors that have instructed me because then I'd be the greatest flier on earth. But that is not possible.

And first experiences—[I] first started in 1939, my instructor was Ted Morril. He had the old Vista Airport out here. I think the sewer plant is out there now in that area. But it was just a little landing strip, and we used to

take off out towards Fernley; we'd go through that pass there. You take off from the strip and go right out through that pass. You couldn't turn, didn't have room for the mountains, so you just take off and go right out through that pass. Then when you land, you come back in. And of course, all depends on the wind direction, you know. But, of course, if you took off towards the west, well then you had room to go on out and turn around. It was a little side-by-side Luscombe airplane. And there's still some of them around. And that was the aircraft I flew in. And, as to the airports and landing strips, that was it, the old Vista airport. That's where we learned.

Then, of course, I flew down in Vegas, and there I flew in an Aeronca. From the Aeronca I graduated to a Cessna 140 to a 170. Now these are what we call tail-draggers; in other words they were not a nose wheel airplane, but they were all tail wheel airplanes. And I flew one of the first Mooney Mites; that's a little single-seater airplane. They're just starting to remanufacture it; it's a little fun airplane. You just sort of slide into it, and that's about it. It's just room for you, and that's it period, no cowlings on the engine or anything. It's just a beautiful little airplane. The fun of it—well, it's a fun airplane. And let's see, I flew the Stinsons and Cessna 195—-[I've] flown most every single engine aircraft that's been made. And in the twin category I've flown the Piper Apache, Beech Bonanza, Aztec—I now own a Navajo—and a Cessna 421, Cessna 320. I was privileged to fly Bill Lear's jet—Learjet, and I had a ride in an F-101 which is a military plane. So that's about—oh, a P-51, that's the old fighter airplane; and a Navy SNJ which is the equivalent to the Army AT-6. I learned aerobatics in that; I can do aerobatics also.

Oh, I've flown a turbo-commander, and MU-2 which is a Mitsubishi, and a Merlin. These are turbo-props, high performance

turbo-prop twins. I have about 2500 hours flying under my belt. I hold a private pilot's license— single- and multi-engine and instruments. And I belong to an organization of fliers which is called the QBs, Quiet Birdmen. And it was an organization that was started in 19—I believe it was '21. In order to belong to the Reno— we call them hangars—well, you can see here that from the number on my card—it was started in 1921, and I went in in 1960, I believe—my number was 17,370, and it was started in 1921, so you can imagine—. The Reno hangar requires that you have at least a thousand hours of flying time and be a good fellow, a hail-fellow-well-met, as it were. We meet once a month on the third Friday of every month, and there is where you can swap your stories because these people— some of them were flying back in World War I—there's some of them still alive. And you talk about your characters; there's quite a few characters there that have been every place and done everything, and they're perfectly willing to share every experience with you. And like I say, if you could have all of the knowledge of these people—. Some of them that belong now are airplane pilots that fly airlines, and yet defer to me as a good pilot because they have flown with me and they know my capabilities, and these people have many more hours than I have, but the hours don't count. It's what you can do with what you've learned. And these people are glad to fly with me. We go sometimes on trips— we have visitations like the Elko hangar, or we have a QB that has a place in Winnemucca—we go up there once in a while and spend an evening there, you know, have a few drinks and enjoy life. Then I load up my airplane with all these fliers that have much more experience than I do. And as a matter of fact, one time (it's comical), I just got my airplane back—it'd been serviced—and one of the

engines was acting up, so we take off out of Reno; we're on our way to Winnemucca, as a matter of fact. This engine started acting up a little bit, so I look around for some help. Said, "What do you think?"

They said, "You're flying the airplane, fix it, do something; we don't care." I mean there was nobody scared, don't misunderstand me, but it was just a question of "Listen, you're the boss, you do it. You're on your own." [Laughing] "We trust you." That was it, great.

You said that your parents didn't want you to learn to fly at all?

Oh, no. Oh, I wanted to fly all my life. And from the time that Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic—and of course, I was privileged to see him come through Reno in 1927 just after he'd made his flight, you know; he made a tour of the whole United States. And I'd always been very, very interested in flying, so when the time came that I figured I could afford to take some lessons (of course, lessons in those days were less—five dollars for an hour), I went out to the old Vista airport which is just east of Sparks and met a fellow there by the name of Ted Morril. Ted's still alive today. He flew for the Fish and Game Commission after he instructed flying and flew for them up until the time he retired. Ted is probably one of the most conservative pilots that you might ever want to meet. Right now he's in his late seventies and still alive and well. And I started to learn to fly with Ted, and we got along famously; and then my parents found out about it and put a stop to that. This was in 1939 we started, and I didn't resume my flying after that until 1950 when I was down in Las Vegas, and I took it up through the GI Bill of Education and so on and so forth. And I continued my flying education down there and went on up through my commercial pilot's license.

There are good instructors and there are bad instructors. And Ted Morril was probably one of the finest instructors I've ever been with. He had a real good knack of being able to impart his knowledge and to be able to teach which is sometimes—it's a question of patience with a person. And I learned an awful lot from him. Of course, the first thing I learned was safety. And you can never be too safe in an airplane; you just can't leave anything to chance, absolutely nothing to chance. And then when I was in Las Vegas, why I had some very good instructors. As a matter of fact, there was a young man that had been a pilot in World War II that got me back interested in flying by the name of Bernie Resnick. And when I started learning again, why, he took me under his wing and was able to make arrangements with the flying school that he would be my instructor. And I went all through the course with him, and it [was] just absolutely beautiful.

But the first experience I really had in Las Vegas was after I'd been flying with Bernie for quite some time and gotten the knack of things. This was in a little Aeronca airplane, and one day—of course, this was at McCarran Field in Las Vegas that I was learning—at that time there was no traffic there at all, as a matter of fact the field had just opened up. There wasn't even any radio communications; they used to use lights to let you know whether it was safe to taxi or anything else. They had a series of blinking lights. They still use them today in the event of communications failure. But anyway when the time came for me to solo, why we'd been flying around the pattern a few times, made some touch and go landings. All of a sudden he said, "Pull the airplane over to the side of the runway." I did, and he got out. He says, "Go." [Chuckling]

I went, and I got up. I made, oh, I guess three or four approaches to land and for the

life of me I just couldn't bring that airplane down. Just scared the living daylights out of me trying to get that airplane down on the ground. So, here's Bernie down on the ground, I'd come down and make a pass and everything—he's taking rocks and throwing them at me [laughs] trying to get me to come down!

But when they turned you loose like that, they made it a point not to have too much fuel in the airplane because what you're supposed to do is just go around and come back and land twice. Well, if you don't put too much fuel in the airplane then pretty soon you're going to have to come down. But I finally did it, came on down, and from that day forward I was hooked. Flying held no fear for me in any way, shape, or form. I just loved to fly, just loved it.

And I did have some experience in aerobatics—which are very nice. People think that aerobatics per se are daredevil things and so on, but this is not true. Aerobatics puts a fine polish on a reasonably good pilot, and you're able to take a machine and control it in other attitudes than just straight and level flying. And the airplane in an aerobatic maneuver is—if the maneuver is done properly—is just as safe as though you were flying straight and level. You do pull a few "G"s, which one "C" is your normal dead weight of your body sitting down in a chair, whatever. And in our vernacular when you pull two "G"s, that means that you are displacing the body from a normal straight up and down position and a force is exerted on it either to the side or whatever or straight up and down; and that comes when you take and you bring an airplane up—take it from its normal path of flight—well, then you exert extra, so two "G"s would be twice the weight of your body. Now, some of the aerobatic pilots like daredevils, the Red Devils, and people like

that; they exert up as high as six and a half "G"s, seven "G"s. Some of our astronauts who fly in space are subjected to tremendous C-force, that is, taking off from the earth. Of course, once they pass gravity, the earth's gravitational pull, why then they're weightless. But aerobatics is a beautiful experience, and it does teach you a lot of things that the average pilot never learns. And there are times, some feelings on whether aerobatics per se will get you out of trouble, and I look at it this way—if a person gets in trouble close to the ground and the airplane goes into an unnatural attitude such as upside down, why it's very, very difficult to be able to react quick enough to straighten the airplane out or to save yourself. So aerobatics, right there at that point, really doesn't do you that much good, but there are times when you might get into heavy turbulence when you're high up in the air, and it's just possible to be turned completely upside down. And when you're there, if you know what to do, then you're back right side up real fast. But these are the things one copes with when they fly, and I've flown many types of airplanes. I think I went into the types of airplanes that I have flown.

And the airports—I've landed at many, many airports all over the United States, and they're all the same. An airport is an airport, and the people that are there—there seems to be a certain camaraderie that if you fly, they're there—"Hello, how are you, what can I do for you?" And they're always willing to help. It's a strange thing. People who fly or are in the flying business are a breed amongst themselves. They help each other in any way, shape, or form that they possibly can. And sometimes if you goof (and as long as you don't hurt yourself or anything), why they'll stand there and laugh at you because it's your fault—you did it!

And let's see: landing strips—I've been into a place called Gerlach up here in the

wildwood. It's a dirt strip, and [there are] quite a few dirt strips that I've flown in and out of around the Vegas area. And the Auburn airport, Auburn, California, you could compare to a strip because it's not very big. As a matter of fact I fly my own airplane in there now, and it's just long enough to accommodate it. Of course, you've been with me to Yerington, and you could see that we were just about at the end of the field before we got stopped, so the bigger the airplane the longer the landing strip you need. And I don't know of anything else I can tell you.

Experiences—to stop back and think of some of the experiences that I've had; [they would] curl the hair on your head. One strikes me very—it's funny now, but I was doing some practicing for a commercial license, and there's such a thing known as the cross-country where you go from point A to point B over to point C—you form a triangle of sorts—and then from point C back to point A again. And this day I took along a friend of mine who was working at the El Rancho at the time I was down in Vegas. We had a Cessna 170. I had graduated to a big airplane then. One-seventy was a four-passenger airplane, single engine of course, fixed gear and a tail dragger—it had the taxi wheel instead of the nose gear in front. It was what we commonly refer to as a tail dragger because it has a tail wheel and you land in a tail low position. So, anyway, we took off, this fellow Oscar and myself. Oscar had been a navigator in the Army during World War II. And I'd checked all my weather and everything, and they said there was a cold front on my route which is—a cold front is cold air overriding warmer air on the ground, and it just comes in and you get these big billowy clouds, you know, thunderheads—but that it was dissipating. So I said, "Well, if it was going to dissipate, why we can go ahead and make the trip." We got up

to a little place called Milford, Utah—there's another strip, a dirt strip, and they had a flight service station on the field—and got fuel there and then continued on my way to Salt Lake.

Well, as we continued from there I should have known better, but I didn't. And one plane flew over and radioed in that he had filed instruments. In those days you didn't have the navigational facilities that you have now. They had the what they called the old A and N range; that was the Morse code; on the left-hand side you had the A and on the right-hand side you had the N—the Morse code is a dot and a dash and then a dash and a dot. And when you're flying the beam on the range, it's called—it's a radio range—when you fly the beam on that, if you get a steady tone, well, then you're following that beam. If you get off to this side then you get the A signal. But it goes out in just four different beams, so you could be anyplace out in here in the N area or you could be anyplace out in here in the A area. So what the pilots did instead of having to listen to that steady tone in their ear all the time, they would sort of S this thing so they'd break up the monotony. But anyway, I was not taught how to fly it, or I had had no instrument time at all, so I really didn't know what I was doing. But as we left Milford we just kept on climbing, climbing, climbing and pretty soon we're up to fourteen thousand feet. And the wheels of the airplane are just skimming the tops of the clouds. We couldn't see the ground or anything, so about the time I figured I was over Salt Lake, I started calling Salt Lake on the radio. There was only one thing for me to do and that was if I was anywhere near Salt Lake, why, I would just have gone into a spin and spun down through the clouds until I broke out below.

So, I called Salt Lake and called Salt Lake, no answer. So, as the good Lord would have it, a big hole opened up through the clouds

and down below us was a settlement of some kind. So I started to spiral down through the hole, got down, and I found out that we were over—well, what we had originally planned to do was go from Las Vegas to Salt Lake, back to Provo, and Provo back to Las Vegas which was a triangle. We find ourselves instead of Salt Lake being up here, we were over here over Provo. We were forty miles to the east and forty miles south. We had never gotten to Salt Lake, and we were forty miles east. Well, the reason for that was that every time you pass what you call a squall line on a cold front—the cold front was moving this way, west to east, and we were going north, so you get a definite wind shift. And the wind took us in effect—when on a low, then the wind goes counter-clockwise, and on a high, the wind goes clockwise. So what happened was, we got into this low and we were brought up over around this way; instead of being able to fly directly why the squall just brought us over that way and a head wind.

So, I said to Oscar, I said, “Well, Oscar, we’re over Provo now.” I said, “Let’s just land here, wait’ll this thing blows over.” And this is something that I learned that day: you never have to get someplace; there’s always tomorrow.

Oscar said, “No.” He says, “Let’s go.” He says, “Let’s go back up through the hole,” he says, “I’ve got to get back to work tonight.” That was mistake number two.

First place—first mistake was that I never should have gone any further north than Milford, Utah. That was mistake number two; I said, “Okay.” So the only instrument time that I had had, I’d had with my instructor. He flew me through one cloud down in California, and at that time we had basic instruments which was needle, ball and airspeed. Needle, ball is nothing more than an inclinometer which is a little ball that sets on a curve, and

then the needle is gyroscopically controlled and it sits straight and always points to the horizon unless you’re making a turn. When you’re making a turn, it displaces the needle, and it shows that the airplane, as the needle goes over to the right side, it shows that you’re turning to the left and vice versa. I’ll show that to you sometime next time we fly.

And your airspeed, of course, lets you know whether You’re going up—if you go up you go slower—and if you are diving, you go faster. And you know what your normal airspeed is when you’re flying straight and level, so the variation of those two. This was what pilots flew on instruments—needle, ball and airspeed. Some of them were lucky to have an artificial horizon; we didn’t.

So anyway, one thing leading to another, I started up. Oh, your compass, of course, anyway to give you your course. But this was an old wet compass that bobbles around all over, and it’s subject to different magnetic disturbances from the ground and also magnetic north, but it gives you a fair idea of which way you’re going. So, away we go back up through the hole.

Well, there again comes the expression, “sucker hole,” because many a pilot’s been killed by getting into weather and seeing this great big hole opened up where you can see sunshine through the other side, you know. He says, “There’s my out,” and he goes towards it and just about the time he gets there, some little angel up in heaven just comes in and just closes that whole thing up. That’s what you call a “sucker hole.” And when it closes up, there you are in the clouds. But this is what happened to me.

But I did remember this ten minutes of flying through the cloud in California, and I held the needle steady and the ball in the middle. The ball lets you know whether you are slipping around the turn or something. As

long as you keep both of them in the center, why your airplane is basically all right. So and I pointed the airplane up; everything was just beautiful, holding it perfect. And Oscar said—he was watching the compass—he says, “You’re a couple degrees off course.” Which, of course, didn’t make any difference anyway because we didn’t know where we were going. So I started to correct for that, and to this day I cannot tell you what happened to that airplane. All of a sudden the airspeed started going up fast, and evidently I must have gone right on over like that and I was just diving right straight towards the ground.

So, luckily enough—you talk about instructors—they drilled this into my head, if you ever get in trouble where the airplane—you get in the clouds or something where you can’t handle the airplane or can’t handle the situation, let go of the controls, the airplane will right itself. This is true because that’s exactly what I did, and the airplane righted itself. Now as the airplane comes out of its dive, rights itself and so on, I saw a faint ray of sunshine through the clouds. I was lost then, completely lost, I had no idea where I was or where I was going. So I pointed the nose of the airplane towards the clouds, towards that ray of sunshine through the clouds, and we broke out on top again at fourteen thousand feet. Then I could orient myself.

So now we’re completely lost. We don’t know where we are. There’s only one thing to do—that’s point the airplane south. So south we go. And you’ve heard the story about the guy being on a boat and getting washed off by a wave and another wave comes back and washes him back on again? You heard this story? On the way back pointed south, the same wind that blew us off course, blew us back on course again; and we landed at Milford, Utah again. You know, the clouds had broken up and we could see the ground and

so on. We landed at Milford, Utah, and when we got down there they said, “Where you have been?” They said, “We already have search parties out looking for you,” because we’d tiled a flight plan; of course when we didn’t report to Salt Lake, what they do is, they wait an hour and if you don’t report in within an hour, why then they get things going to look for you. So I explained to them what happened.

They said, “Well, you’re just plain lucky, that’s all.”

So we got fuel and then went on our way back to Vegas. And everything was fine until I laid down to rest a little bit before going to work that night, and all of a sudden I just started shaking all over. [Laughs] It finally hit me about what happened. But I think that’s my most vivid experience in flying. Of course I’ve had a lot of others.

Then after a while in Vegas the money ran out and I wasn’t making that much money to continue with the flying so I laid off flying for about ten years. And then when I came back to Reno, the gentleman you met today got me interested; Mr. [Eugene] Hughes got me interested in flying again. And I started all over again, and it took me about an hour and a half of flying, you know, to solo again. And from there on out, why, I really got hooked and went from there. Of course, flying is an expensive hobby, as it were; and if you don’t have the money, you don’t fly, period. So, Gene sold me the first twin I’d ever flown, that was an Apache, Piper Apache. And we started taking instructions in the twin, and everybody said at my age why it was just too much for me; I wouldn’t be able to handle it. But I went ahead, and I got my twin engine rating and flew quite a bit after that. And after a while the Apache wasn’t fast enough for me so I traded it in and got an Aztec. And I was getting a little more seasoned, a little more knowledgeable of flying; and now at this

point I have about twenty-five hundred hours of flying. And I personally feel that I'm just beginning to learn. You know there are fliers and then there are fliers. There are people who fly and fly and fly and never learn anything; from a hundred hours on they're the same pilot at ten thousand hours. But if you apply yourself and really go into all the intricacies of flying, why you will never cease to learn, never cease.

But I went to the Aztec, and there again stupidity—I guess instruments and myself have a kind of a bug-a-boo—but one day as luck would have it, my wife and I were in San Francisco, and I was going to fly down to Long Beach to meet this friend of mine down there. We were going to have dinner that night. So we left San Francisco, and I checked the weather and everything was beautiful in Long Beach; the forecast was fine and everything. I did everything by the book. And as we flew along, [we] get over Long Beach and it's completely socked in. When I say socked in, they had about maybe three hundred-toot ceiling and we were on top of all this. So, lost again! I didn't know where I was. Of course now, today, we have much better radio facilities and so when I say I didn't know where I was, I had a good inkling of where I was, but I still had not gotten an instrument rating. I had a fair idea of what to do and what not to do, but not really—I wasn't that knowledgeable. So, I'm over the top of the clouds, and no way I'm going to find Long Beach. So I called Long Beach approach control, and I told them my predicament. They said, "Well, can you see the ground at all?"

I said, "No, as a matter of fact, I can't."

So they said, "Well"—at that time I didn't have a transponder. A transponder is a radar unit on the airplane that transmits a signal to the radar on the ground, and the radar on the ground in turn interrogates it and

lets the controller know where you are on a radarscope. So I didn't have a transponder. Of course they can pick up a shadow of an airplane on their radar. So what he had me do is—they provided me with what they call a DF steer, which is a direction-finding steer. And you key your mike for a few seconds, and that in turn activates a directional finding needle in the controller's room, and the needle points to where the airplane is—a method they call triangulation, where you have a station here and a station here, and you're maybe over here; this needle here'll point up there and this one here'll point here and they draw a line on there and where the two lines intersect, that's where you are. So they found me. [Laughs]

So then they gave me directions to fly; they call them vectors, headings. And they brought me over, and they said, "Now you should be downwind of runway two-five."

Well, runway two-five would have been over to my right, so I said to my wife, "Do you see a runway down there?"

And I think about the time, that time, she was kind of scared because I looked at her and she was going like this, you know [nodding yes], and I thought she saw the runway. So I banked to take a look.

I said, "There's no runway down there."

[She] said, "What runway?"

I said, "Didn't you hear me just ask you if you saw a runway?"

She said, "I didn't hear you say a word!"

So I kind of in a way blame the controller, too—and myself—because if I told him what kind of equipment I had on board the airplane or if he had asked me, then he could have told me to make an instrument landing approach as best I could and that would have gotten me down. He could have vectored me to the instrument landing beam, you see. But, anyway he started vectoring me all over the sky and pretty soon he had me over Fullerton

airport, and he said, "Do you see anything down there?"

I said, "Yes, I see a runway down there."

And he said, "What does it say?"

I said, "Fullerton."

He said, "That's where you are;" he said, "why don't you land there?"

I said, "I can't because this man's waiting for me."

Of course this was stupidity there on my part. I said, "I have somebody waiting for me there at Long Beach; can you direct me to Long Beach?" So, back we go again, and now he brings me over a green tank, a gas tank—when I say gas it's the type of gas you use for heating, you know, not fuel.

So he says, "Do you see a green tank?" Now at this time it's getting dark. I'm in trouble. He says, "Do you see a green tank?"

I said, "I'm over a tank right now, but," I said, "I can't tell you what color it is because it's dark."

And he says, "How high are you?"

I said, "Four hundred and fifty feet."

"Get up, get up!" He says, "That tank is four hundred feet high."

I said, "I'm over it now."

He says, "All right." He says, "Take a two hundred and forty-five degree heading off of that tank," he says, "and you'll be headed right for runway two-five."

I said, "Okay." So I come on down and as I break out the runway is sitting like so, and over here is the McDonnell-Douglas parking lot where they make these big airplanes. I'm over the McDonnell-Douglas parking lot, so I told him, I said, "I don't see any runways—I'm over some kind of a parking lot."

He says, "Pull up, pull up."

So [laughing] just about that time I saw the runway over to my left, so I said, "I see the runway." I said, "I'm going to land."

He says, "It's your decision." So I landed.

Well, when you fly for any length of time and at altitude, you become distended. Now when you come back down to the ground, the pressure starts building up. And I want to tell you I had to go to the bathroom so bad, so bad. In the meantime I'm excited about what's just been happening to me, so I get on the ground and the guy says, "When you get your airplane parked," he says, "call the tower." Now I know I'm in trouble.

So I said, "Do you mind if I got to the bathroom first?"

He says, "No, I understand what's happening to you." [Laughing] I parked the airplane, then to my chores, and then I go call the tower. And he proceeded to bawl me out.

He says, "You took one man to get you down." He says, "You held up all other instrument traffic in the area."

I said, "Yes, sir, that's right. I did." I said, "However," I said, "I—number one," I said, "I did everything according to the book. I checked my weather before I left San Francisco. I'm not instrument rated, and they told me that the forecast was going to be clear in Long Beach; when I got over Long Beach," I said, "it wasn't like your forecaster said." I said, "The next thing is that when I went to school to learn to fly, the first thing that they told me is when you get in trouble, ask the man on the ground; he's there to help you." And I said, "Sir," I said, "I want to thank you," I said, "for what you did for me." said, "You got me down, and," I said, "that's the main thing." I said, "We're down safe and sound." I said, "And you deserve credit for that."

And so after I profusely thanked him for about five minutes on the telephone, he says, "All right, enough, enough." He says, "I'm glad you're down; everything's fine." He says, "of course I'm going to have to report this," he says; "you may hear from them and you may not."

I said, "Do you mean to tell me I can't fly my airplane out of here now?"

"I didn't say that," he says, "we'll be glad to see you go!" [Laughs]

So when I came back to Reno after that little episode, why as I told you I belong to an organization called the Quiet Birdmen. (And as a matter of fact this fellow that just called me now is going to be initiated into it tonight, Bill Skliar. He's a retired colonel from the Air Force, and he was the test pilot at Edwards Air Force Base when they were testing this SR-71 which flies at eight thousand feet and above, and flew from New York to London, England in one hour. But, real wonderful person. Now he's teaching gliders out at Stead airport.) But anyway, when I got back, there was a gentleman by the name of Jack Walsh who was an instructor out at Stead and also my sponsor in the Q-Bird organization—he and Gene Hughes whom you met today. And I recounted my experiences. Lo and behold, and there again I show you the camaraderie between people who fly; he said, "This does it." He says, "You're going to learn instruments. If you're going to fly into that area," he says, "I want you to be able to make an approach into an airport and land safely."

So he had his own airplane, and of course I had my Aztec. And for no charge whatsoever, this gentleman used his airplane and sometimes mine (it'd all depend on which one was available and what type of work he wanted to do); and every night after I'd get through here, we would go out and fly. And he was a tough taskmaster because he left nothing to chance at all, and he demanded absolute attention and precision. And he taught me instrument flying; we took a trip back East, and we flew instruments eighty percent of the time. This was before of course I got my license. He was with me, and we flew instruments all the way. We got into,

you might say, every conceivable situation. We went from Reno to New Jersey, then New Jersey down to New Orleans back to Albuquerque, Albuquerque into Las Vegas, Nevada, and then Las Vegas, Nevada back to here. And of course, like I say, the radio equipment that I had then was much more sophisticated than the way I originally learned it. And I learned how to fly instruments, and I haven't been in trouble since. But now I've been through icing conditions, and I've had, we'll say, ninety percent of the experiences that most of the pilots have. But again there's an adage: There are old pilots and bold pilots, but there are no old, bold pilots.

But of the people that I have met in the flying business, there are many characters including myself, but they're all good people and they're all good pilots. And the proof that they are is that they're all still alive. And amongst the fraternity in the Q-Birds we have people— well, we have one for instance, Joe Sanders. He's seventy-two years old and still instructing. We have Marty Cromberg who is still flying; he's in Minden now (was an instructor in World War II), crop duster.* Gene Hughes was a crop duster in Sacramento. Crop dusting is a very hazardous occupation because they have to zoom down, let go of their load of dust or whatever it is and then go on back up, and there's power lines and everything all around the fields, but all these people have survived, and they're just that much the better man for it.

We have airline pilots that belong to the organization. And when you talk to these people and tell them the experiences you've had, they've all been through the mill, every one of them, and flying a 747 is no different than flying the smallest airplane. They all have their problems, and they all have wings, and they all fly. They all fly the same. The only thing is you're a lot heavier and a lot bigger.

But they all fly, and these people they'll talk to you, tell their experiences, tell them your experiences; and we just get up there and we might talk for two or three hours there during dinner about the different things that happened in their lifetimes, discuss accidents that people have, and the stupidity of what might have happened. Very very seldom that you have mechanical failures in airplanes any more. About ninety-five percent of the accidents that happen are pilot error. Something happens to them; we don't know what it is, and we just hope that it never happens to us. But they may get up on the wrong side of the bed in the morning or something, have a fight with their wife, or whatever the case may be, and away they go and something happens to them and—. Well, you've seen—it has the same effect as a person driving a car. If they're not in sorts during the day or something, they're more prone to take chances or they might be a little more accident prone during that particular day or something. And these things happen in airplanes too. That's one of the reasons why they have on the larger airplanes, two pilots and a flight engineer and the whole thing. If one's not quite up to par the other one can always take over for him.

When you fly by yourself though, that's—you asked me about what's so beautiful about flying. Well, the only thing I can tell you is, when you are flying, you're the pilot in command. There's nobody up there that can help you; there's nobody that can do anything for you. You're it; you've got to do it yourself, and if it weren't—I mean there're so many people that can't do it themselves. They have to have help along the way or this, that and the other thing. Because if everybody was the same, then the top wouldn't be able to hold them all; but when you're up there you're alone, you are the guy. The buck stops there.

It's about as simple as that. And you have the responsibility of other people, and it's exhilarating, really, to know that people trust you enough with their life because actually that's what they're doing. When they sit in that airplane, they're putting their life in your hands. And that's a darn good feeling.

I've had people—I'd fly them someplace sometime, and they go to sleep. It's the greatest compliment I could ever have. I mean that's just plain unadulterated trust, faith. So, that's about all I can tell you about flying. I could tell you a lot more experiences I've had, but they're kind of scary in a way, and yet if you can keep your cool, why everything turns out all right.

I'll give you one little experience, one more, then we'll kind of call it a day. This Aztec that I had, I had a fellow that used to maintain it for me. He was a young fellow that worked for me here, and he liked to fly also. But he was kind of a—well, I'll have to call him an idiot, but I liked him. He was kind of like my own son, and he was an airplane mechanic. And I would trade him flying time for maintenance. It was a good arrangement, and we both got along beautifully.

I remember one time he took the airplane, and he went down to—young fellow and of course he liked girls—he went down to see a girlfriend in Orange County which is just south of Long Beach, California. And I don't know whether he didn't have the money or what, but he figured out his fuel between Orange County and Las Vegas, and he would get fuel in Las Vegas. He wanted to stay there overnight. Fine. So—but on the way what he didn't figure was the headwinds, and he got over Las Vegas and ran out of fuel and crashed my airplane in the desert. But he didn't crash it

*Since deceased

bad enough so that it couldn't be repaired, and I wish he had. But of course it couldn't have burned up because it didn't have any fuel left in it. Anyway, the insurance company insisted the airplane be repaired which was never any good after that.

But, they brought it down to a place in Oxnard, California to repair it. After a year and a half without an airplane, it was finally ready to go. So I went down to get it, fly it with their chief mechanic and test pilot, and the day came that we were going to fly. We got off the ground, pulled the gear handle to bring the wheels up, and the airplane felt kind of funny. I checked the gear lights, and one was still on and the gear hadn't come up all the way. So, there's an emergency pump handle that you use to pump the gear up the rest of the way with that. So we were going to fly over to Santa Barbara which is about forty miles north of Oxnard and have the loudspeaker checked in the airplane. So one thing leading to another, we flew over to Santa Barbara, and I pushed the gear handle down to come down to land, which you've seen me do. I got two green lights, and one gear didn't come down. So we start pumping the gear down again, finally got it down, landed. I noticed there was an oil slick on the inboard side of the left engine which is right by the pilot's side, so I told this test pilot and mechanic, I said, "Better uncowl the airplane, check that oil leak." This was a test run, you know; the airplane had been on the ground for a year and a half. So we checked it. Lo and behold there was a little fitting, an elbow, there that comes from the oil sending unit—it was leaking. So he borrowed a wrench and tightened it up. So we got everything—got a new speaker put in the airplane and away we went, still the same trouble with the gear, but we knew we could pump it up and down, so that's what we did.

So away we went, and as I took off and made my left turn out over the Santa Barbara channel, I looked back, which is a normal thing to do, and here's smoke coming out the left engine, and I mean smoke. So I immediately called the tower, and I said, "I'm coming right back in." I said, "It looks like we got a fire in the left engine."

They said, "You're clear to land any runway you want."

I said, "Thank you very much," kept cool, slowed the engines, slowed the airplane down and so on.

Well, we got to land on the first runway and couldn't get the gear down again, so I had to go all the way around again. And I explained my predicament to them. So they got the fire trucks and everything waiting for me down there. We landed, and we checked the airplane out. And we had two quarts of oil left in the engine; all the rest had gone over the exhaust. It was just smoking from hitting the exhaust, but the exhaust wasn't red hot so it didn't catch fire—it was just smoking. And what had happened when he'd tightened that up, he'd split that elbow and that did it. So we put a new elbow on and put more oil in the airplane, went on back to Oxnard, and then the next day they started checking the gear out. Got that pretty well resolved, and the day after that we took another test hop, had my wife in there that time.

So we go on around, everything was working beautifully. So I come down to land and put the gear handle down again, and everything looked perfect, but there's a safety device. When you pull the throttles back to a certain percentage of power, why if the gear is not down and locked, a horn blows. And I pulled the throttle back, but it was too late then. So I pulled the throttle back, and the horn, the gear horn, blew. So the guy, the test pilot says, "What are you going to do, what are you going to do?"

I said, "I can't go around." I said, "The airplane's going to land." So I said, "Push the gear handle down and hold it there, just hold it there," which meant there was hydraulic fluid going down the holder.

So he said, "Be careful, be careful."

I said, "Listen, this airplane's going to touch the ground just like you were going over a basket of eggs, which I did. And lo and behold, we came to a stop, and everything was fine except that when we got out to look to see what was wrong, there's an over-center lock on the landing gear. When it comes down, and when the gear is down and locked, this little hook comes over the top of a rod, holds it like that. Well, what had happened, through their idiotic adjustments, this hook had come over about like that [halfway], and it could have gone that way and the gear would have collapsed, or it could have gone over there that way and locked; but it stayed right there which gave us an indication of exactly what was happening, luckily enough. So—but you see again if you can keep your cool, nothing happens real fast in an airplane. But again, ninety-five percent of the accidents happen when people panic, and when you panic it's all gone, as one thing compounds the other and it's all gone.

* * * * *

Reno in the thirties was a very quiet town. There wasn't too much going on other than the gaming and of course, I'm talking about the gaming industry now. Actually the Bank Club was the only gaming establishment in the town. Of course it was down here in the old Golden Hotel—I'm talking now of course about the early thirties. And life in itself in Reno at that time was real nice, and all the kids were going to school including myself. And I just started in high school in 1930—in September of 1930.

And we had much more severe winters than we have now. We used to go ice skating on the Truckee River. Oh yes, the river used to freeze over, and just up there on the fork, coming through Wingfield Park where it forks into two different areas or just above that, why we used to go ice skating up there all the time in the wintertime. And we used to have below zero weather.

We had, of course, one church. It was my church—I say one church—we had several churches in town; for my religion we had the sole St. Thomas Cathedral. There were no other [Catholic] churches built at the time.

And family life—we would go on picnics on Sunday. We used to go up to Incline Village sometimes, at the Lake, which was at that time just a sandy beach, no development whatsoever. It used to be very, very nice to go up there. Now of course it's all built up, and I think it's kind of taken the enjoyment out of going up there really—see what's happening to the beautiful area. And of course, commercial stuff moves in; that's one of the problems, not only the commercial, I mean the homes and this, that, and the other thing they built up there, more people. And the minute you get an influx of population no matter what it is, whether it's homes or whatever, seems that the beauty of the area leaves.

But Reno was a real nice, quiet town, never had any problems of any kind, no crime problems to the best of my recollection. And the police department was very well run. Of course, at was a small town in the thirties and maybe fifteen thousand population. Mostly everybody knew everybody, and there really wasn't much to it. It [was] just a summer town. People would come in, I mean, we'd get an influx of tourists during the summertime, and then during the winter, fall, the town was very, very quiet—sort of kept to itself. And really there wasn't too much to tell about it.

Everybody went along their way and made a living, and there were just no problems that I can put my finger on.

It was a fun town to live in really. It was real nice. Well, that's about all I can summarize as far as Reno, and sometimes nostalgia makes you wonder if it wasn't better that way. But by the same token with the dollar values and the inflation and so on and so forth, you couldn't have made a living in Reno at that time if the inflation was such as it is now, because there wasn't that much play came into the town, and at was just a—well, everything was low-key, especially the gaming, and nobody pressed or advertised gaming such as it is today. And people came up, gambled, went on home, and didn't have the credit problems that we have today. Most of the people came up with cash in their pocket, and you weren't cashing checks and so on and so forth. If you did cash any checks, it was payroll checks and things like that. So it was a real nice town to live in. I enjoyed it very much.

And we had our social functions, church functions and picnics and just had a real lot of fun. Seemed to have more time for social functions then than you do now. It was a more sedentary life, and nobody was in any big hurry to go anyplace or do anything. And we had two big hotels, the Golden and the Riverside. And of course then, those days, Reno was known as the divorce capital of the world. And we had a lot of dude ranches where divorcees could come and live. Of course there was the old fable about the women throwing their wedding rings into the Truckee River when they got divorced, but wasn't so. Well, I say maybe one or two or three maybe did it, but they just didn't go there and fling their wedding rings into the river. [Chuckling] As kids in those days, we would have been in there grabbing them real fast. [Chuckling] But it was good publicity.

Reno was never known as a gambling mecca. It was always known more on the divorce side. And of course once in a while you'd get some minister or somebody'd get up and give a big lecture, fire and brimstone, on the evils of gambling. It was comical. The greatest one though was—the funniest thing that ever happened insofar as I can remember with the Palace Club—in the early thirties, my dad opened up the place. The Salvation Army used to come around with a bunch of people and their tambourines, and they'd sit right out here on the corner of Commercial Row and Center Street right in front of the place. And they'd talk about the evils of gambling and everything else, and they'd just make a great big speech and then all the girls with their little tambourines would come in around—come into the place around the customers [chuckling] asking for a handout! [Laughing] And you know it was comical because they'd just get out there and preach to the people coming in, "Don't go in there. It's evil," and so on and so forth. And then all of a sudden here they'd come with their little tambourines beating their tambourines, out looking for a handout. It was comical, and then we used to laugh at them and go out and ask them how they were doing [laughing]. Of course, I was a kid then, you know, and kind of smart and just go out there and harass them a little bit just like they were harassing us, but it was really comical. And this was all of the time, you know, the old hallelujah bit, "I'm a reformed gambler." They'd get some, we call 'em "plants," in the group and he'd start telling how he was saved and all that kind of stuff. Those things don't happen any more.

Now it's riots and people get hurt; in those days we didn't have those things. Everybody condoned everybody else, and if they didn't like what was going on they'd just laugh it off and walk away. But of course, you're looking

back and seeing the good old days and it'll never be the same and so on and so forth, but you have to accept change. It's going to come, so you might as well roll with the punches and go along with it because if you don't, you're going to be left out in left field, period. But that's about it insofar as life in Reno in the thirties. It was just a wonderful life. That's all I can say.

There was—I will say one more thing—there was a lot more home life. And it was family. No matter what transpired in work or anything else, my dad was always home for dinner in the evening, and the whole family sat down at the table and ate together. Sometimes we didn't like what we had to eat, but we ate it and that was it. My dad was a very stern person insofar as ruling the roost as it were. And my mother is a wonderful cook. As a matter of fact at eighty-four years of age she's still a beautiful cook, and if I ate all the things she'd like to fix for me and send home—you know, every day I go down and see her, and I pass by and—. We play a little game now. I go around, I go into the kitchen to see if she's made something for me to take home; and many times she has something that I like, and she wraps it up for me, and I take it on home. But she's very good; she's a very good Italian cook, and it's not Italian food like we get in a restaurant. I mean it's meticulously prepared, and if she's going to have a dinner or something she might start three days before. And she makes her own paste or pasta and everything else. And she still does that, and believe it or not she puts towels on a bed and lays the pasta out on it. She cuts it up into lasagna, whatever she's going to cook; and then she spreads it out over these dish towels. She lays dish towels over a bed, and then spreads it all out there so it'll dry uniformly and so on. But this is her way of doing things, and she's just a beautiful

cook. She's often said, "I should go to work in a restaurant someplace," you know, kidding like.

I said, "Ma, they couldn't afford you, not for what you'd pay for the food that you make!"

But as I say, we had a lot of good family life, and there was oh, you had your sibling problems with kids. You know one jealous of the other, all that kind of thing, but that was very quickly resolved by my mother and my father. [They'd say], "Enough of that, and that's it, period. You're all here, you're all kids—you're all our kids, we love you all the same, and that's it period; so I don't want any more arguments or fighting because that's the way it is." And we've all grown up with a very deep mutual respect for each other. And the whole family is still very close knit—very close knit. And, which is good. You don't find this in many families. One goes one way; they go off on tangents, but we've always kind of been together and stayed together, other than the eighteen years that I spent in Las Vegas. I was back and forth all the time up here. And, but the family's always been very close knit, shared our lives together, and it's been very rewarding really.

U.S. ARMY, 1943-1945

Okay. U.S. Army 1943-1945. During the time that we still had the place—when the war started in 1941 up until 1943 when I was drafted in the Army, why, we really didn't have too many problems insofar as Reno in wartime. Everything went along just about the same as before, except they activated Stead Air Force Base. And at that time, we started having problems with the commanding officer up there. He wanted the "cribs," as they were known, closed down, otherwise he was going to declare the town off-limits to the troops.

And of course, I don't know how much difference that would have made in the economy of the town, but it was wartime and everybody was flag waving. And I guess the city officials decided that it was better to close down the cribs and tighten up the town instead of declaring the town off limits. I have mixed emotions about which would have been better. But it was shortly after that that I was drafted in the Army.

Very comical about the way I was drafted—I had the dubious distinction of being the first pre-Pearl Harbor father drafted

out of the city of Reno. They had at the time pre-Pearl Harbor fathers, and people who got married and had children after Pearl Harbor so that they could evade the draft. And I was called up before the draft board because I worked in the gaming business, and I was told by— I forget his name now, but a manager of the J. C. Penney store, he was the third member—I forget his name. But they had W. W. Hopper, First National Bank; and Russ O'Brien from O'Brien-Rogers Mortuary; the three members of the draft board. And I was called up before the gentleman from J. C. Penney, and I was told that I would either have to get an essential job in the town or be drafted. And I asked him what he considered an essential job. And he said, "Well," he says, "you could come to work for me as a clerk in J. C. Penney."

And I said, "You consider that essential as opposed to what I'm doing?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "Well, go ahead and draft." It was one week later I got my draft notice. Of course, I was a young fellow then, and had I known

what I know now and seen what politics and everything was and so on, why it certainly wasn't worth it.

But as far as Reno in wartime during my tenure here before I was drafted in the Army, it didn't change too awful much. Everything went along pretty much the same. I guess the changes came after I left because then I understand that they closed the gambling establishments at twelve o'clock at night and allowed them to open up again at eight in the morning. I suppose that was so there wouldn't be any absenteeism in work, although there was no work here that entailed defense work of any kind that I knew of. But I guess they went along with the whole bit all over the country, the old flag waving.

But then I'll give you number one observation on the effect of the war on gambling in Reno, and that was about it. They closed the cribs, and after I left, why they did close up the places at night. And yes, we did have one defense project going on, and that was up at Honey Lake up in California. The people used to come in on weekends and cash their checks here. And they probably figured that they would have an effect on absenteeism at that place.

Then I'll give you my observations on being drafted, and the decision to lease the Palace Club at the time was due to my being drafted because my dad was in ill health. Of course, we didn't at the time know what was wrong with him, but anyway we decided that he was not capable, of course, of running the place by himself. And I had two brother-in-laws here and myself that were working in the place. One was Pick Hobson, and the other was Warren Nelson. And Warren went into the Marines, and Pick went into defense work, and I was drafted so it left my dad here by himself. And being in ill health, why that prompted the decision to lease the club out.

And of course the lease went for, I believe it was eleven years and then an option for another ten. Of course, we didn't know what was going to happen. I didn't know whether I was coming back or not. Actually we didn't know what was wrong with my dad, but we knew that he would never be able to enter the business again. I mean it was just an impossible thing. So we leased the place out to a group of people. There was Joe Hall, Vic Hall, Baldy West, Jimmy Contratto, and another fellow by the name of Archie—Archie Sneed. And they all came in here together and eventually they split up until Baldy West wound up being the sole owner of the place. They all agreed to disagree, couldn't get along I suppose, and he became the sole owner of the place. And that was about it. And I worked for them here for a while after I was drafted in the Army; in July it was, and I had to report in September. So I came back, worked here for them, showed them what was what, you know, the place and so on and so forth. When I came back I assumed that I would have my job back, but there was no offer made and I didn't ask so that will go into the "return to civilian life."

Now as far as Army service was concerned, I went into Fort Douglas, Utah where I was inducted in the Army. Well, I was inducted earlier, and then I went on into Fort Douglas, Utah which was more or less of a depot that they took all the draftees from the Ninth Corps area and sent them out to different units throughout the country. And I myself and another group of fellows were sent to a place called Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi which is right in the deep heart of Mississippi. And a matter of fact, the camp got a write-up in Time magazine as being a dismal array of tar paper huts. I remember the article. And it was very surprising the way the Army worked because on my Army General

Classification Test, my IQ score was a hundred and forty-one which bordered on genius, and [chuckling] my experience in business was completely ignored. I think the fact that I even mentioned that I was in the gambling business was quite a detriment to me in the Army. As I said, anyplace out of the state of Nevada in those days, why you were looked down upon as a *persona non grata* as it were.

So, anyway I went into the Army, and I thought well, with the scores I got, why I had to get into something befitting my intelligence. So— [chuckling] the comical part was I was sent to Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi, and I was assigned as a pioneer in a mine platoon. Well, I was assigned to an anti-tank company. An anti-tank company per se was a regimental anti-tank company. They had thirty-seven millimeter anti-tank guns, and they were to be deployed along the front lines to repel a tank attack to protect regimental headquarters. And here in the states we had thirty-seven millimeter anti-tank guns, and when we got overseas, why, then we got fifty-seven millimeter anti-tank guns. (And just a note in passing, we did have an incident with a German Tiger tank with one of our guns, and I think we fired twenty-five shots into the tank, and it came on and overran the gun and just smashed it.) So [chuckling]—. Anyway, I was assigned to the pioneers in a mine platoon.

Now the mine platoon in an anti-tank company—the job of the mine platoon is to lay out mine fields—practically, we'll say, out in no-man's land, so that in the event we have a tank attack, why, then the tanks would run over the mines and blow the treads of f and they couldn't proceed any further on into the regimental headquarters. So being an inquisitive person, and I'll go into this a little more— when I say I'm intelligent, I consider myself to be a person of average intelligence—

so, and being inquisitive, the first thing I wanted to find out was what is a pioneer in a mine platoon? And I found out by asking the question from the platoon sergeant, and that [the pioneer] is the guy that takes the shovel and digs a hole to put the mine in. So the only lower I could go in the whole Army would be a yardbird. So, again, snooping around and asking questions, I decided that this was not for me.

So, the first thing I did was—I had quite a bit of experience as an automobile mechanic. Strangely enough, self-taught, if you will, but like some of the young people today that build their own automobiles and racers and speedsters; only in those days we didn't build those things. We took whatever we could from scratch and built it up and had our means of transportation. And I studied on my own quite a bit. So, and the clincher as it were that got me the job in the Army that I was looking for was to be company mechanic of this anti-tank company, because the mechanic would take care of all of the trucks and jeeps and so on in the company that hauled these guns around and the troops to the mine platoons and so on and so forth. Plus the fact that you always stayed at regimental headquarters which was maybe a mile or two behind the lines, not necessarily that it was any safer because many times the discipline and protocol at regimental headquarters was so bad that I used to go up and sleep with the boys up on the front lines, really. I mean I have documented proof of this. It's nothing that—as a matter of fact as we go on further, I'll tell you how I got a medal. I got the Bronze Star medal for heroic achievement in the Army.

But anyhow, I went to the motor sergeant and I spoke to him in fluent English telling him of my ability to perform as a company mechanic; and he looked at me like I was out of my mind more or less, because I heard later—.

We became very fast and good friends later on—I found out that he had come over from the province of Bologna in Italy. His name was Angelo Sebben. He was Italian, and he had been spirited out of the country because he had been in an incident where some of the collaborators with the Nazis—they had an incident and four or five of them were killed. So, consequently, he was shipped out of the country and came over here, and in order to get his citizenship, why, he joined the Army. And he was serving his time in the Army to get his citizenship. Very, very good man, very brave man. (I'll tell you another little incident with him later on after we became friends.) But he mentioned to one of my friends that he didn't like the idea of a fellow that used big words in front of him because you know, his English was very limited, and he didn't like the idea of a fellow that was using big words. He says, "There's no way in the world that this man can be what he says he is; he's just giving me a snow job with his big words."

So anyway, I was undaunted and just kept the pressure up with him, and finally he said, "All right"—now this is where doing something or knowing something sometimes comes in good stead. When I was here, I had a Cord automobile. The Cord automobile had a front wheel drive. It was the only front wheel drive automobile—the last one they built was in 1937, which incidentally, you saw the one I have. So in working, I would take this Cord apart any time any little thing would go wrong with it. So, knowing about the front wheel drive and the universal joint which they called a constant velocity universal joint that drove the front wheels which enables the engine to apply power to the wheels even though the wheels are turned, rather than just in a fixed position straight forward like a rear wheel drive automobile—they turn the axle period, and the rear wheels go forward. However, the

Cord automobile would apply power in the direction in which the wheels were turned, which in many cars today now are all front wheel drive. Most of your foreign cars and your Cadillac El Dorado, the Oldsmobile Toronado, and some of the cars now like Chevy's putting out, and Ford—they're all front wheel drive. And the reason for it is—of course I'm digressing from what we're talking about, but it's still—the reason for it is that front wheel drive provided traction up at the front end and applies the power in the direction of the turn. And scientifically, any mass of weight that is headed in a certain direction, it's a physical law that it tends to go in that direction no matter what you try to do to veer it off, which is the principle of the gyroscope. So, when you have a rear wheel drive automobile, that whole mass is turning that way. When you turn those wheels all it does is want to go in the same direction, puts a pressure on the wheels. So when you have a front wheel drive automobile, you apply the power in the direction of the turn, so the whole mass just follows those front wheels around, and the rear end just follows around like a trailer. But that, in passing.

So, in knowing about the universal joint and so on and so forth—Sergeant Sebben took me down to the motor pool, and he says, "Here's a jeep." And he says, "Now I want you to take the universal joints out of the front end, take them apart completely, put them back together again, put them back in the jeep and grease them of course and so on.

So I said, "Sure."

So everybody stood around all ready to laugh. So I very deftly took the universal joints out, took them completely apart because it's a rather complex thing that has ball bearings in it, and they have grooves that they turn in, so that the joint can turn this way and still get the power from the ball bearings in between

the two grooves. So I took all the ball bearings out, cleaned the whole thing up, put them all back together again, and put them back in the thing. And also did one other little thing that they were not aware of, and that is that the screws that held the cage to the universal joint, when I tightened them up, I took a punch and peened them so that the screw couldn't come loose because they didn't have lock washers or anything. It was too small a thing, so I peened them against the side of the universal joint so that cage would never come loose in traction.

So when I got through, one comment, "I would never have believed it." He didn't say it in those many words, but "Doubting Thomas" was convinced. So it was one week later that I became the mechanic in the anti-tank company. The mechanic was shipping out so they had the opening. Of course, I knew all these things by snooping around and finding out.

We had Dodge trucks, six-by-sixes we called them; they had three wheels on each side. And they had four drivers on the back and two up front, so they call them six-by-sixes. Then when we got overseas, why, we had the big GMCs which were actually eight-by-eights because they had dual wheels on the back end. So there was four, four and two up front— they call them eight-by-eights now. But—and then our jeeps and our maintenance trucks and so on and so forth.

But I spent fifteen months in Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi. After I became company mechanic, of course, I got a rating. Of course I was PFC then, corporal, and then the mechanic calls for a sergeant's rating. So when I got my corporal's stripes, why an order came down that they would take all privates and PFCs (PFCs are private first class which has the one stripe on his arm) and they were to be shipped out to different companies, different divisions to go overseas. And all

noncommissioned officers would remain as what they call cadre. Cadre means that the nucleus of the division stays there to teach the new recruits coming in. So in effect I went through three basic trainings. I went in in September of '43, and we shipped overseas on—well, let's see it was Thanksgiving of 1944. And as a matter of fact I was overseas for exactly one year. I passed the Rock of Gibraltar on the eighth of December going overseas, and I passed the Rock of Gibraltar on the eighth of December coming back home, one year to the date.

My wife came to visit me just after basic training was over with, and I was very much disillusioned with the Army and so on. I had my share of resentment while I was in there. The people like I said, the average IQ of everybody in there was around the moronic stage, all our noncommissioned officers and so on. So, anyway they decided, I guess, that they were going to make me heave to and maybe break my spirit, which I had a pretty good spirit. But, it so happened that for some reason or other, they put me on KP over the weekend knowing that my wife was there, and that I wanted a pass. So I invited her to come up and stay at the—not at the barracks; they had a place for visiting people over by the PX, which was the post exchange. And they had some quarters there for visiting wives and so on and so forth. So, she came over, and on Sundays they usually had cold cuts or something, you know, at lunch, and they had no dinner at all. So for the people that were—you know they'd only let out fifty percent of the complement at one time for a weekend pass. So at the end of the noon meal, why I was on KP, kitchen police, which means doing the dishes and so on. And the mess sergeant, name was Stiles— I'll never forget him; he said, "Pete, we got a problem."

I said, "Yeah, what is it, Sarge?" You know, I'm resigned; I know that if there's a problem, I'm it.

So he said, "Strangely enough, all the guys dumped everything in one garbage can today."

I said, "Yeah, I know it."

He said, "Well, you know it has to be separated."

And I said, "Yeah, I know that."

He said, "Well, you're the guy." I said I knew that, too. My wife was there, so I got myself an orange crate and got one for her, and sat on the orange crate, got two other garbage cans, and I'm up to my elbows in those garbage cans, all this slop and everything that's in there, separating all this garbage. So finally the mess sergeant looked out, and he says, "You meant it, didn't you, when you said we couldn't break you?"

I said, "That's right, Sarge. This is what I have to do, and you tell me to do it;" I said, "I'll do it," I said, "but you can do this to me every day, and I'll still be the same old Pete."

So, he said, "Okay."

From that day forward, I was never troubled again. Wasn't too long after that I got my PFC stripes, private first class. And after that I went to corporal and from there to sergeant, and never once was I ever bothered again. And then I became one of the guys. But if I had rebelled, why then it would have been a different story, no doubt. But in those days the military was very, very strict, very tough. And you know the old story—you've heard the stories about people having to break bricks with a little hammer; I saw this. They had one fellow in there that just—I mean he just wasn't adapted to military service whatsoever. Every night for four hours after everybody else was through, he was in the shower room breaking the brick with a hammer. And he finally became a mental case; they shipped him out. But I saw this. And these are the little vignettes of life, as it were.

One time, there was a guy—they had us again on KP, and that day we had to scrub the mess hall floors on our hands and knees with a brush and a bucket with GI soap that had a lot of lye in it, you know. So we started scrubbing floors, and this other fellow's scrubbing next to me. I start scrubbing and singing. Well, the guy looked at me, and he says, "How can you be here on your hands and knees scrubbing a floor," he says, "and singing?"

"Very simple, it helps you pass the time, number one; and number two, we're going to be here 'til it's done any way, so you might as well relax and enjoy it." I said, "It's a job; we have to do it." I said, "You can stay there and grumble all you want," I said, "it's not going to change it."

He said, "I never thought of it that way." So he starts singing too. Before we knew it the job was done, and we were both very happy.

It's just the way you look at things. You know, you can make yourself miserable or you can make yourself happy on a deserted island or in the midst of the biggest city in the world. I mean it's all in your mental attitude and outlook on life. So, that was it.

So, but going through basic training was really a dull thing, but I found out how the Army regulations worked and so on and so forth and I didn't have a bad life at all, really. It was very rewarding because, you know, once you get into the know of things and you get to knowing people, it was very rewarding. I learned a lot. I'll say one thing, that when we went in there the cadre that was in there at the time had come from Fort Blanding, Florida; and the average IQ—not the average—the lowest was around thirty-nine, and the highest was around—well, as a matter of fact Sebben had the highest IQ which was a hundred and ten. He had the highest IQ of all the noncommissioned officers that were in the outfit when we went in there.

And, oh, incidentally, I applied for Officer's Candidate School while I was in the company, but the company clerk, a fellow by the name of Jones, came to me and told me, he says, "You'll never leave this company."

And I said, "Why?"

He said, "Well, you've been accepted at Officer's Candidate School, but the company commander stopped it." That's right.

He says, "You see, if a company commander will go to the higher-ups and say, 'This man is too valuable to me,' that stopped it right there." Sol never did get to Officer's Candidate School. I went before the Board and passed the Board. I got the notice I had passed the Board, and I'd be notified later. And I was never notified. So you see, even politics in the service.

As a matter of fact, there was another fellow—this is documented fact because this other fellow and myself, we also had applied for the Army specialized training program, which was college. And they would release you from your active duty and go to college and then become an officer also. And as a matter of fact, this fellow and I are very good friends right now. His name is Sam Siegel; he's an attorney in Long Beach area, and all these facts can be attested to. I'm not talking out of turn or anything, but these are the things that actually happened. And I'm not crying about it, don't misunderstand, because as I say my service experience was very rewarding. I learned a lot, and I was very conscientious about my job in the service, and I think I did a good job, came out with an honorable discharge. And I did get a medal for achievement as I told you before.

So I went on through our stateside duties, and then the division was finally called up in October. But it was really called up in September, and we had to get ready to ship to a place called Camp Shanks, New York,

our port of embarkation, and from New York we shipped overseas. And, well, we had our Thanksgiving dinner in New York and then we left. We had thirteen days going overseas. We landed in Marseilles, France and from Marseilles we went to our staging area. And then we went off to the front lines. And we spent a hundred and forty-three days on the front lines.

It was quite interesting. The wartime is very, very funny. It's comical other than you know that you're in a position where you might get killed. But there were a lot of comical incidents overseas. Like, we were in Marseilles, and we had a big staging area up on [what] we called Windy Hill. And the Germans would send bombers over at night and of course, in the states everything was blackout, this, that and the other thing. And here on Windy Hill you had your big bonfires and everything else going, and nobody paid any attention to it whatsoever because the bombers were going out and trying to bomb the ships that were in the harbor that were hauling fuel and stuff like that. They could care less about the GI troops who were up on the hill. Nobody paid any attention; the bonfires just kept on going, and it was a completely different situation than stateside.

And then, of course, we were all outfitted, and we started moving up to the front lines. And on our way up there we got caught on the southern end of the Battle of the Bulge, and we were completely surrounded for about a week. This was just around Christmastime. As a matter of fact, I recall it was very, very cold, and we were amongst a group of people that had 90-millimeter anti-aircraft guns, and they had no shells to fire. And we dug ourselves what we called six-man foxholes. What we would do is dig the crust of the earth so that we could put an anti-tank mine in there and then blow the anti-tank mine up

to get down to the soft earth. And then we'd dig it out, and we'd dig this big hole and then we'd take logs from the trees that we'd cut. We used to use cordite which is an explosive. And we'd wrap it around a tree, then set it afire, and see it explode. And it would shear the tree off. Then we'd snake these trees over and we'd criss-cross them and build up a big shelter over the top. So in case a shell did hit or something why we couldn't get hurt. And then we'd get down in this hole, and six men would sleep in that hole. Then we kept very, very warm. As a matter of fact, we had one of the few six-man holes with a electric light in it because I had a maintenance light from my maintenance truck. And I would take it from the battery and bring it down into the hole, and we'd have a foxhole with electric light in it.

And I'll never forget Christmas morning 1944, we all woke up, and of course we didn't have any food. All we had was some of the K-rations that we had with us. And we had, shall we say, liberated a piece of bread and some cheese from the farmers around there. And Christmas morning we had the piece of bread and some cheese for breakfast. And we had no hot food of any kind. There was no way to get it to us. We were completely surrounded.

So, then the one thing that did come through was the mail. We got our Christmas cards from home. No food, but we had our Christmas cards. So it was not too long after that that things broke, and then we started moving on up to the front lines and into a little town called Saargümd. German town. Well, it was right on the Saar River. And we holed up there for the winter until we started our spring drive, and life was kind of boring and mundane there during the winter. But strangely enough all during the time that we were at the front lines, I never dug a foxhole outside of these six-man holes that we're

talking about. Other than that, we'd always get in a farmhouse or something, and we'd sleep in a farmhouse. And we kept nice and warm and everything. The worst part was being able to keep clean because we had the problem with water of being able to heat it, and you know to take a bath or something. But at this farmhouse we were holed up, why, we were able to get one of these—I don't know what it was, a great big cauldron. We filled it with water, and we'd light a fire under it and all the guys got to take a bath. Oh boy, what a—just beautiful, absolutely beautiful! And as I say, we stayed there until they started the spring drive. We never had any incidents of any kind with the Germans at that point.

Then we started our spring drive and went on across the Saar River, and we went up through the Alsace-Lorraine country. And we were supposed to make the initial crossing of the Rhine River. Well, we were going straight east, and Patton probably saved our lives, but a lot of guys died. He came down from the north on a southeast heading on it, and he cuts us off and he made the original crossing of the Rhine River, which was a real bloody mess.

But then we went on across the Rhine and went on through a little town called—I'll never forget this town—Bubingen, Germany. And we were holed up there for a little while. Things were getting hot and heavy there because there was a rock quarry about three miles east of the town. Germans had holed up in it. We had an awful time getting them out of there. And people were getting killed and hurt all the time. We would get bombarded at night, you know, with artillery barrages. And it was very funny because while we were getting ready—well, the first thing that happened was, our mine platoon laid a mine field up on the road coming down from the rock quarry. And strangely enough, we had an ambulance that was going up to pick up

some wounded, and the driver moved off the road and hit a mine, and luckily nobody was hurt there, but it just flipped the ambulance up on its back into the mine field. And of course in wartime, again strangely enough, you know, you'd think that we would have all the supplies and every thing you needed. But we didn't. And we were very, very short of tires for our trucks. So as soon as we heard about this ambulance—why, there were four good tires on that ambulance, the three that didn't hit a mine, and the one on the spare. So I got together with the fellow that had laid out the map of the mine field, and we got all the coordinates and everything. And went up there the next morning bright and early just when the sun was just barely—just the dawn, and we tip-toed around all of the mines and took the four wheels off the truck and brought them back and used those tires and the wheels, too. We just left the ambulance sitting there. But the other thing was, the officer that was in charge of the ambulance had his month's whiskey ration in the ambulance; we got that too. So we had a ball that night!

But these things happen and you had to scrounge everything you could get. I mean if you needed a part or a anything for a truck, you know if you ordered it, it's the old government deal, you wait a week for it. So, whenever we could find anything, why we just scrounged it and took it, that's all. And it was just, it was a matter of survival. It wasn't a question of stealing anything, it was really a matter of survival.

But then we went on up to another town—. The day we were supposed to leave, why we're getting all the trucks and everything all loaded up, cleared the rock quarry, and at that time Germany was beginning to show the effects of losing the war, and they had left vehicles and were going to horse-drawn artillery, the whole thing. And sometimes you'd see these

beautiful horses just been hit by artillery, our artillery, and just gutted out, the whole thing. Of course war is hell, as General Sherman said. I mean, these things are not pleasant, but they're fact.

But anyway, the old days, young fellow and GI and all, why the Germans had their outhouses, you know. Of course, anytime you get ready to go someplace or something, somebody has to go. So I took my comic book with me—I was studying for Officer's Candidate School again—and [chuckling] I went to the outhouse, and all the fellas were standing around getting ready to move out; and this again is fact, and nobody knew that I had finished what I was doing, and I was on my way back and lo and behold here comes a German eighty-eight shell and just blows this outhouse to smithereens. So, the guys said, "Well," (oh, incidentally, nobody in the Army could pronounce Petricciani, so they always used to call me Pete for short), so one guy said, "Well, let's go pick up Pete, whatever's left of him."

And I saunter on into the thing; they said, "You're supposed to be dead!" [Laughing]

I said, "Yeah, I know, but I'm not." So that was just one little incident.

I forgot another incident, when we first moved up to the front lines—Army dictates that the oil must be changed on trucks at a certain time. So keeping a record of all the trucks and so on and so forth, we had one truck on the front lines and again, snow maybe three, four feet high, cold; so I had to go and change the oil on this one truck. So I got this other fellow to help me, and we're walking across a snow-covered field with a five gallon can of oil—the oil came in cans like they have lard, you know, and they have a little handle in the middle. So, we put a wooden pole through that and were walking across with this five gallon can, and again

lucky for us the Germans were not as good a shot as they should have been because as we're walking across the field, here comes a shot and the shell went through the oil can. So we hit the ground immediately and just left the oil there and went on back. Now that's the end of that. We'll go and do it at night, which we did that night. So that was the first incident; the second one was the outhouse incident. So that took care of that.

So then we moved up on out of Bubingen and into this— I can never remember the name of the town—but it was right on the Siegfried Line. And there was a no-man's land of about, oh, maybe three miles between the town and the Siegfried Line. And of course, we were holed up in a farmhouse again, which was the last house up the road facing the Siegfried Line. And, there's a couple of incidents happened there. One was they had a couple of fellows that were getting combat fatigue—they call it combat fatigue—they were going completely crazy. But another thing with the Army in those days, until a fellow was gone completely, why, nothing happened. And I had told our top sergeant, I said, "Sarge, these guys—there's something wrong with them, watch out; we're going to have problems."

He said, "Well, nothing we can do about it," he said, "until they show actual real signs of going crazy, why, nothing we can do."

So, one night, I was sergeant of the guard that night, and he put them on guard, the two of them, at the same post, which was the house right across the street from us, which also faced the Siegfried Line. Then the rest of the company was holed up in houses on back down the street.

So we had three different posts, one at my house and then another one across the street where these two fellows were, and then another one on down the street; so in case

something should happen between the two forward ones, why, the third one could alert the rest of the company. Well, what I would do is—we had a German over there that was firing a German eighty-eight right down the middle of the street. But he didn't have the right range because it would land in a field the other side of town. So, what I would do, I'd wait for him to fire his gun, and then I would run across the street, check my guards on the other side, and then I'd wait for him to fire another one, and then I'd run on down the street and check the other outpost, and then I'd wait for him to fire another one, come back to my own house.

So, first thing that happened, why, I ran across the street to see where these two fellows were, and I couldn't find them at their post. So I looked around the house, and they were over huddled up in a corner, the two of them together just scared to death. So I said, "Fellows, you get back up there because you know what happens when a guy deserts his post, wartime especially."

So they went back up, and I went on and checked out my other post and came on back and went across again and couldn't find them, went down in the same corner; there they were all huddled up again, so I just clicked my ammo and said, "Okay, fellows, you either get it here or you go up there and take your chances, one or the other." I said, "But I'm perfectly within my rights to shoot you right here and now."

So they went back up, and I stayed with them for the rest of the night, made them stay there for the rest of their tour that night. And then I told the sergeant the next morning, I said, "Now Sarge, this is what happened; you ship those guys back." And we never saw them again. They had bombed—they had flipped completely.

So then we stayed there until we were ready to make our assault on the Siegfried

Line, and we stayed there for about oh, it was a little over a week before we gather or muster up all our forces to really make an assault on the Siegfried Line. And what I used to do is—I had some clear area out there and any vehicle that was broken, I would bring it out there and work on it. So one morning I was out there, and I was working on a jeep, but I had a radio with me (battery operated) and I used to go in and listen to the Armed Forces news at certain times. And this morning it was nine o'clock and the news was coming on, so I came on inside to listen to the Armed Forces news. And I was sitting on an orange crate in the room there, and all of a sudden I got knocked off the orange crate. A German eighty-eight shell came in and just—well, it hit that jeep and just blew it to smithereens.

So, all the fellows said, "Well, we'd better go pick up Pete again; last I saw him he was out there working on the jeep." I was laying on the floor inside the farmhouse listening to the news [laughing]! So that took care of that.

We went on through, and we crossed the Siegfried Line, went on through and across the Rhine River, and on down into a little town called Landsburg, Austria. And that's where we were taken off the line just a week before the war ended.

But, again, an incident that kind of rubbed me the wrong way, when I mentioned earlier that after finding out a few things that everything didn't seem quite like it should be with World War II, and the thing that turned me off completely was, we were holed up in a factory. And of course, GIs, young fellows, they get snoopy and they have to go around every place and see everything. As a matter of fact, the Germans had quite a time with it because they would have little pens like that, you know, that they'd leave around. People'd pick them up, and they'd blow up and blow

their hands off or something. They didn't particularly care to kill anybody. If they'd maim them, why it just put that man out of action and it would take two or three guys to bring him back to the hospital. So it just meant taking men off the front lines to take care of a wounded man. I mean this was their object in doing it. They didn't care about killing people. They just wanted to maim them or wound them so they would have to be taken back. And that just took that many men off from the fighting force.

But anyway, this other fellow and I were snooping around this factory and strangely enough, towards the end of the war, civilian trucks and transportation in Germany were converted to burning charcoal for their fuel. And in so doing, they had to have—they had a big boiler on the back of the bus and then they had a little twelve-volt electric motor that turned the fan that would blow this gas from the burned charcoal up to the front of the engine, so that the engine could utilize it to run. And this factory that we were in was one of the factories that was installing these motors and installing the charcoal burning boilers on these buses and trucks and so forth. So we went into one of the rooms where they had a big supply of these little electric motors. And you must remember that World War II started on December seventh of 1941, and the name plates on these little twelve-volt electric motors was Electrolux Corporation of America 1943! So that kind of turned me off and made me wonder whether it was really worth it or not.

Of course, then after the war was over we were occupation for quite some time. And that was very enjoyable there. We had homes to live in, and I was in charge of one house where several of us stayed. And it was very interesting. We had the USO-supplied doughnuts and stuff.

Oh yes, one other incident I can think of was, in the Army, you know, everybody gets paid at a certain time. So, an officer and myself were delegated to go back to battalion headquarters to pick up the payroll. And it so happened that a few days before that, for reconnaissance or whatever, the troops were going down a draw, and the Germans were all up on top. And they all got down in the draw and boy, here came this big barrage of everything available and practically wiped out that whole outfit! And our outfit was supposed to have been in with them. So when we went back to get the payroll, why the first thing, this officer and I saw this doughnut truck.

We said, "Well, we'd better get some doughnuts and bring them back to the boys and have some ourselves." So I said, "Yes, a good idea."

So [we] went over there, and the girls in the USO in charge of the doughnut truck said to us, "Well, we can't give you any doughnuts." They said, "This is for the people around here."

We said, "Is that right? Tell you what you do—you get two bags and fill them up with doughnuts and we're not kidding. And you fill them up and give them to us right now. We just came in off of the front lines, and we're in no mood for your chitchat. We want those doughnuts. Now if you want to make an issue of it, start right now." We got three bags of doughnuts real quick! And we brought them back to the boys.

Anyway, we went up to get the payroll for the outfit, and they said, "Well, what are you doing here? We have you wiped off on our books."

I said, "Well, we're very much alive and there," so they had to make up a special payroll for us. But as far as they were concerned, we were wiped out on their books.

And then let's see, what else? Oh, during the course of the war, as it were, we were the

first company into the town of Heidelberg, Germany. Now Heidelberg, Germany was declared an open city by the mayor, and it was untouched, completely untouched. The town of Mannheim just across the river was completely bombed out, absolutely a shambles. But during our travels from place to place, we were able to stay at a German Army barracks one time. And they had these generators, auxiliary generators, which they used for lighting in case the regular power was knocked out, and lo and behold I liberated one, and I towed it behind my truck. And everyplace we went, we had lights that I would hook it up to the supply of the house, and we had lights. So, this one incident, we got into Heidelberg, and our particular company stayed in the Heidelberg Hotel that night. Of course, it was all blackout and everything else. So, they said, "Pete, better get some lights in here."

So I said, "I'm working on it."

So I hooked up all the lights—what I would do is snip off the wires coming up from the power poles, and then I would connect my wires from my generator to the fuse box. So I did all my connecting and everything; the rest of the guys were getting all set to get in their rooms. Lo and behold, I turned the generator on, and somebody had forgotten to turn off the switches. And here neon lights and the whole thing just blazed right on up; right in the middle of the war and blackout, the Heidelberg Hotel lit up! Why we weren't court-martialed, I don't know; but the next day we got a good talking to and for almost the remainder of the war, we never slept in a farmhouse or a hotel or a town again. We stayed out in the field. But it was very, very embarrassing to say the least.

Then one cute little incident was—you get very callused after a while. I told you how I got drafted by a J. C. Penney fellow; why we had a fellow there by the name of Canary; and

he was the type of a fellow that really didn't belong on the front lines at all, and probably had been a momma's boy all his life. But anyway, we were in a farmhouse (this was before Heidelberg), and we were going along pretty fast in those days because the Germans were beaten, and they were retreating very fast and so on and so forth. As a matter of fact, we had very little contact with them on the front lines, I mean actually man-to-man contact. They would surrender, or whatever and, you know, you'd overrun them when they'd surrender and that was it. But anyway, we were holed up in this farmhouse, and Angelo Sebben and myself.

Oh, I'll go back to an incident to tell you how fast friends Angelo Sebben and I became. We were in Kleinsbittersdorf, Germany, which was just a hop, skip, and a jump from Saargümd; that was our first jump-off in the spring. And, we got a call that some of the trucks were bogged down in a certain place, and I had to go. Well, Angelo was the motor sergeant, and I was the company mechanic. So it wasn't anything really pressing, but we did have a place there where when you went by, there was an open spot in the road, and the Germans would start shelling that open spot whenever a GI truck would go by.

So, we were just having our evening meal, and so they told me, "Pete, you got a call; you have to go out to a certain spot."

So I said, "Okay." I said, "I'll finish my meal and go on—there's nothing pressing, just something that somebody broke down and they weren't going anyplace anyway." So, I finished my meal and I went over to get the maintenance truck, and it was gone. So I said, "Where's the truck?"

They said, "Sebben just took it."

"Well, where'd he go?"

"We don't know; he probably went on that call." So, that's exactly where he went.

When he came back I said, "What gives you the authority to do my job for me?"

He said, "Well, Pete," he said, "I want to tell you something." He says, "I'm a single man; I have nothing to lose." He says, "I met your wife and your two children, and," he says, "if I got killed out there it wouldn't mean that much, but if you got killed," he says, "you'd be leaving three people." So, this goes back to "greater love hath no man than he who would lay down his life for a friend." And this again is fact.

I've never forgotten Angelo for that. But I was embarrassed, to say the least, because you know a guy takes pride in—in those days I was taking pride in being a soldier and doing my bit, as it were. And yet this man did this. So it was pretty nice.

But I'll now get back to Canary. So anyway, Angelo and I and Canary were in this house, this farmhouse. And they had moved up a lot of artillery to make the drive the next morning. So what we had was—we had a 105-millimeter cannon, and then we had the 155-millimeter cannon behind those. And what they used to do is they would fire what they call time-on-target. The first thing they would do is fire the 155 millimeter cannon, and when they would go over the one-o-fives, then the one-o-fives would fire. So that here all of these shells hit at the same time on the target. They had it all timed out real good; that's what they call time-on-target.

Of course, we had our electric lights, I had my generator running and everything, and we had liberated some schnapps which is a potato mash liquor; when you drink it, it burns going down. But it was real high alcohol content, and we were doing nothing that night anyway so Angelo and I got pretty well smashed on schnapps. Canary didn't drink at all. So what we would do is, every time we'd get in a farmhouse or something, we'd always

lay down underneath the windowsill facing the enemy, so in the event that a shell hit, the shrapnel would spray out and over us, you see. But Canary was sleeping on the other side of the room, and we were watching this thing—before we turned out the lights to go to sleep, Canary was sleeping under a picture that was hanging on the wall. And every time these cannons would fire, why that picture would shake.

So, we didn't really have too much use for the man, but Angelo says, "Think we ought to take that picture down?"

"No," I said, "he's the one who's sleeping under it, and if he wants to, let him take it down. No, leave it alone, hasn't come off the wall yet." So we turned out the lights and went to sleep.

All of a sudden, here comes this time-on-target deal; picture came off the wall, came down and hit Canary in the head, and cut his head open. He starts running around the room—we had to catch him—[chuckling] you know, he's scared to death, had to catch him and hold him down. So we got a flashlight to take a look to see what happened; well, he had quite a gash on his head—nothing, didn't break any bones or anything, but he was bleeding like a stuffed hog. So, we sent him back to the hospital, and they had to take quite a few stitches in his head. But he didn't even get a Purple Heart because it wasn't from enemy action; it was from our own guns!

So Angelo says, "You see, I told you we should have taken that picture down."

I said, "Yes, I guess you're right." So we went on back to sleep. That was the end of that incident. But it was quite comical.

One time our outfit was overrun, and they got one of our jeeps. So we had to requisition a new jeep from ordnance. And we got our jeep, and then we overran that same outfit and got our jeep back, so we had one extra

jeep we didn't know what to do with. So I took that. And in taking the jeep I fixed it all up. I was able to requisition a radio out of a German car, and a Buick steering wheel, the old banjo-type steering wheel. And I had that jeep fixed up just beautiful, and it was my own jeep because it was written off on the books. And after the war was over, why I used to take my jeep, fill it up with gas, and (I like to travel and I still do) I would, on weekends, instead of hanging around the town—. We were stationed in a little town called Ulm, Germany after the war was over as occupation. Actually we were stationed in a little town called Wiblinge which was just three kilometers—it was right on the Danube River, used to go swimming in the Danube River. And it's not the blue Danube, believe me. It's dirty, filthy, and swift. You jump in the river to swim, and the current will take you about a mile downstream before you can get back to shore. It was real swift, and it's quite a river. But it was a lot of fun.

But I used to fill up two five-gallon cans of gas, and then fill the jeep up, and on weekends I would go traveling over the German super-highways which they called autobahns and go to different little hamlets and towns and the bigger towns. And by that time I'd learned to speak German pretty fluently, and I got along very well. And I really enjoyed my traveling through Germany, and Germany per se was a much cleaner country than—they're a more industrious people, a lot cleaner people than the French or the Italians and even the English. Germany was, you might say, a spotless country, I mean the country, the homes. The steps and the streets were washed every day, the front steps of homes and so on and so forth. I mean they were really a clean and industrious people, and even though at the time we were enemies. But you have to, you know, give them credit for what they

were. And I enjoyed my stay in Germany. I saw a lot of the country, and of course, I did get furloughs to England and France. And strangely enough, being Italian, I never did get to Italy.

And there is another very comical [thing] about the Army and what it does. I can speak and read Italian fluently; and they could have used me as an interpreter, or whatever, and maybe they had qualms that I might defect or something. But, never once did I get to Italy, never once did I get to Italy. And my last little bit with the Army was after they decided to ship us back you know. And all of a sudden they called me up to regimental headquarters, and they say, "We see here by your MOS that you can type."

"Oh," I said, "yes, I can type."

They said, "Well, we have all of this paperwork to process, all you people to go back home, and we need typists in the worst way."

I said, "Gee, isn't that strange?" I said, "You didn't need one when I came into the Army. I could type much better then." I said, "Look at these hands. They're all gnarled and everything from working on those trucks." I said, "I couldn't even move them to type any more." I said, "I'm sorry, but I don't think I'm physically capable of doing the job, thank you very much."

They said, "All right," walked out. You know, if you're not good enough once, you're not good enough a second time.

RETURN TO CIVILIAN LIFE AND EMPLOYMENT, 1945-1948

After the war was over, why, I was occupation from the end of the war which was in April, I believe. VE Day was April something, I believe it was. And we were occupation until around November, but one time during our occupation, they had started to outfit us already to send us over to the western theater of war in the islands and Japan. And of course, when Roosevelt died and they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, the war ended so we stayed occupation until November of '45 and they started shipping us back home. So we had Thanksgiving dinner on the big hill in Marseilles, France where I went in; and then they put us on a ship and shipped us on back home and to a place called Hampton Roads, Virginia. And a very memorable event when we got off the ship—they brought us in, the first thing we had was a nice big beautiful steak dinner and a glass of milk, which is something we hadn't had from the time we left the states until we got back.

And then we were processed through there, took about two or three days. I was

shipped back to Fort Douglas, Utah where I was inducted; and I was discharged from Fort Douglas, Utah. And at the time we were talking to people there that were being processed and had maybe one or two days before they had been discharged, taken out in civilian life, and they'd come back and tell us how tough it was out there. And some of them were re-enlisting in the service, no jobs and this, that, and the other thing because right after the war things were pretty quiet. So I had mixed emotions about what was going to happen even though I was being discharged and going back to my family. But I was discharged on the twenty-third of December, arrived in Reno by train Christmas Eve, twenty-fourth of December, 1945. And of course, I was back with my family—brothers, sisters, wife, children. And actually I had no plans [for] the immediate future. I wanted to take a little time off, reaccustom myself to civilian life; so my wife and I took a couple of trips down to San Francisco, other places. I just didn't do anything for about a month or so.

And of course I previously mentioned I came back into the place here and felt probably they'd offer me my job back, but they didn't, so I didn't feel it was my place to come back and force them to take me back. They could have asked me if I wanted to come back, and as long as they didn't why I just said, "Well, that's something else down the drain."

And my brother-in-law, Pick Hobson, had this place in Sparks called Shorty's Club. And he wanted to get out of there. He had a deal made for the Frontier Club here in Reno with some people from Las Vegas that owned the Thunderbird at the time. And he was very desirous of selling the place, and he had two other people working for him, one by the name of Leo Madden [Medgovich] and the other one by the name of Marco Baro, both Slavonian people. And they had both worked for my dad previously, so I knew them pretty well. Let's say that I *thought* I knew them pretty well. And we each bought a third of Shorty's Club in Sparks.

But "observations on changes in Reno during my absence." Reno didn't change an awful lot. The only thing that I found that real estate had gone up quite a bit. But actually Reno had not changed any appreciably. There wasn't any change whatsoever that I could see. I hadn't been away that long. I went in in 1943, and I was gone about twenty-seven months. And during that time, of course, they kind of put the lid on everything anyway, so it really wasn't that much change. There was no development in the downtown area. The town was the same.

And the only change in gaming operations that I knew that changed when I came back was—the first thing I noticed was when I was in the Army, why we'd work for fifty-five minutes or whatever we were doing, training, whatever it was, and then we'd take a five minute break. And when I was working in

the gambling business before that there were no breaks. We didn't know what they were. Well, there were breaks in this respect that people would come to work, the graveyard shift, which started at two o'clock in the morning, went 'til nine o'clock in the morning. They worked seven hours. Then the day shift would work from nine to six, and the swing shift would work from six until two. But they worked right straight through. But this was a way of life. It was during the Depression; people wanted to work; they were willing to work. And you couldn't afford to hire extra people to give them breaks and so on and so forth. So what they did was, we had staggered games, and like if the day shift would come to work at nine o'clock, well, they would—just enough people to relieve the graveyard shift. Of course, the graveyard shift got a break in the middle of the shift where they closed the games, and the porter would come up and mop up the floor, so on and so forth. In those times we had linoleum floors. So they'd get their eating time and so on there. There were breaks in effect, but they weren't breaks as we know them now where you work an hour and get twenty minutes off, something like that. Then around eleven o'clock, you'd open up more games. Well, the people that came to work at eleven o'clock would give people that had been working since nine a break; they'd come about ten or fifteen minutes early and give these people a break, and then when they came back, the eleven o'clock crew would go on. And then we did have one person that would come in and relieve everybody for their lunch period, you see. And then in the afternoon they'd work right straight through again. Because by the time they all got through with their lunch period, why the last ones might go out three o'clock in the afternoon or something, and then they'd be off at six.

So when I say breaks, such as they were, when I came back— (of course when I went in the Army, then these five minute breaks and ten minute breaks, I mean it was unheard of. I said, “What are they doing?” And of course you get accustomed to it, and it’s pretty nice). But then when I came back, I find where people are working an hour and getting a half hour off or working an hour and a half and getting a half hour off, whatever. I said, “My God!” This was completely foreign to me. Of course I had to be reindoctrinated into civilian life when I came back. And that’s about the only change in the gaming operation at that time.

Then “leading figures”—same old deal, I mean, the banker was still the same, and the J. C. Penney’s store guy was still the same, and the undertaker was still the same. There really wasn’t any changes in the local politics or in social life, as a matter of fact. But when I did come back I was kind of a tough guy in a way; I was real hard-muscled and so on and so forth. I always conducted myself as a gentleman, but one time it was kind of funny. Social life was still the same, I mean the same people—there was really no change of any kind. But they had a place open called the Club Fortune, which is where the Club Cal-Neva is now, and a fellow by the name of Brad Hewin was the owner at the time. And one of my ex-Keno writers, who didn’t go into the service, name of Clyde Bittner, he went to work for the railroad as a switch engineer, not married, no children, but he stayed out of the service. So, the wife and I went to Club Fortune for dinner one night. And of course here comes Clyde up, “Hello, how are you?” and so on. He was very, very nice, and first thing he greeted me with after we went to the table, he says, “This sure beats a chow line doesn’t it?”

I looked at him kind of funny, and I says, “What do you know about a chow line?” I said, “I have to come back and get insulted

by people like you.” I said, “I was over there in combat, you were over here operating a switch engine, and you’re telling me about chow lines and how much better I’m going to have it now?”

“Well,” he said, “I didn’t mean it that way.”

I said, “Well, how did you mean it then?” He had no explanation for it, so that was the end of that conversation.

But the comical part was before dinner. I am a creature of habit more or less. I sat down with my wife at the bar, and the only cocktail that I really like is a Manhattan, drunk Manhattans all my life, and I have one or two before dinner, and that’s the extent of my drinking. But we sat down at the bar, and I asked for a Manhattan. My wife had her drink and I forget what it was—she hardly drank at all, I think she had a grasshopper or something. But, we were the only ones at the bar. The town was real quiet in those days. I mean there wasn’t really anything going at all. So we sat down at the bar, and I had one Manhattan. It was fine. So then I said, “Let’s have another drink.”

My wife said, “Fine, have another drink.”

So I had another drink, and the bartender forgot to put the cherry in the Manhattan. So, being the type of person I am, I called him over; I said, “Mr. Bartender,” I said, “you forgot to put the maraschino cherry in the Manhattan.”

There was one fella sitting down at the end of the bar, and he said, “Tch, tch, tch—no cherry.”

I didn’t say anything. I called the bartender over so that the gentleman could hear it, and I said, “Mr. Bartender,” I said, “I’m a very peaceful man;” I said, “however, if you don’t go down there and ask that fellow to leave,” I said, “I’m personally going to go down there and use his head for a football.” I said it so the man could hear me.

The bartender didn't have to go down there. The gentleman slowly got up and walked out. But at that time, I was in pretty good shape. I'm sure that I could have used his head for a football. But it was kind of a comical incident, wasn't funny at the time because I was just a little bit irate, but as time went on, I got over my feelings of resentment and so on and so forth.

I came back and found out where all these people had been around here making money hand over fist and so on, and you wondered sometimes whether it was worth it. As I mentioned with the Electrolux deal and so on, you might wonder sometimes whether it was worth it because these people had never been exposed to war such as war was. And you know, even though it was the enemy—I have to regress a little bit

After the war was over and we were occupation in Germany, the children in those areas didn't know they were brainwashed and so on, and when we'd get through with our evening meal of going through our chow line as it were—and what we didn't eat we'd throw in the garbage can as we went by. They had three garbage cans; one was edible, the other non-edible, and the other one trash. And as you went through your chow line, why you dumped each particular item that you didn't eat or use into the different garbage cans. And we'd see these young children come with little cups and go into the edible stuff in the garbage cans and take it out and bring it home. And that wasn't very pleasant to see. And of course our people here had never been exposed to this. Well, maybe it's just as well that they weren't because that meant that the enemy would have been in our backyard. But it wasn't very pleasant.

Well, Sparks in 1945 and '48 was just like Sparks was before. And again my brother-in-law, Mr. Hobson, had gone to this fellow

Shorty who owned Shorty's Club. It was a bar, and the building was owned by the Bennetts who had slot machine routes in town. It wasn't really the best arrangement in the world, but it was the best there was at the time. Shorty owned the bar. The Bennetts had the slot machines in the establishment, and Hobson had the gaming, which consisted of one Crap table and a couple "21" tables and a small Keno game.

And of course we were dealing there; it was just directly across from the old roundhouse, the Southern Pacific roundhouse there. And every payday, why, all the old "railheads," we called them, would come in and cash their checks and so forth. And it was a good living. And the thing—of course, hindsight is so much better than foresight, and if I had any brains at all, I would have looked for another location where I could have augmented the income of the club, you know, had the bar and the slot machines and the whole thing; and then I could have become Dick Graves or John Ascuaga as he is today. However, it was all right for a while, but it was kind of a rough crowd down there. You'd have to have a big billy club in one of the compartments we had there. And once in a while they'd get into some pretty good donnybrooks and fights and so on and so forth. But it was kept down as much as we could.

And these people were—they were very basic people, and there wasn't anything gentlemanly about them or anything. And you talk about interesting customers, they were very uninteresting really. And there weren't any characters per se. They were all characters in one way or another. They did a lot of drinking, and it was their way of life. And I mean, if you wanted to accept their way of life and, in our vernacular, deal to them, fine. If you didn't, why you were persona non grata. They didn't want you. And it took a little

while even after I took over there, you know, to break in with these people and become friendly with them because number one, I was in the gambling business, and they, you know, they looked at you askance. And until they could accept you as one of their own, why you weren't very well liked. But I got to knowing everybody, and it was really nice. I went to work, took over in January, I believe, of '46, sometime late January of '46 or February. I forget when it was exactly. And stayed there just a little bit better than a year.

But, my reason for leaving—well, we sold out; it was in the spring of '47 we sold out, just about a year and two months. My other two partners—they're both dead now, so it doesn't make any difference. I've always had a very savory reputation in the gaming business, and my dad before me, and myself were very well known to be honest people in the gaming business. And my two partners liked to cut a few corners from time to time, and I didn't want the stigma on my reputation. And they weren't interested in—well, they wanted too much to buy them out at the same time. So we figured it would be better to just sell out and forget it, and that's what I did because I just didn't want to become a part of any cheating that they had mind to or probably did without my knowledge. I just didn't believe in it; I still don't believe in it.

Square gambling is probably one of the strongest things in the world, when I say strongest things in the world, that eventually everybody that plays will lose. And you don't have to cheat to make a living in this business. As long as you get the proper volume, why you're going to make money. There's no question about it because you have a certain percentage going for you, and if nobody steals from you, you get that percentage, why there's no way in the world that you can miss making money. And I've always adhered to

that, and I believe in it. It's my philosophy of this business, and that's the way it is. So we just decided to do a partnership divorce, as it were. So we sold out, and that was the end of that.

Then I just laid off for a while, and then Hobson had the Frontier at the time, and his partners that he had from Vegas were disenchanted with Reno because it wasn't the kind of business here that they had in Las Vegas. So they wanted to sell out. So he bought them out, and when he did, I went to work on the graveyard shift at the Frontier for him as a shift boss. And I stayed there, and of course, again, Reno, as I said, was a very quiet town at that time, and it wasn't much money going on in the town and so on. And summertime was fine; the place went along and made money, but towards the end of summer and so on, we got real quiet. We just couldn't hack it with the place. Harrah opened up in 1947, and when he opened up it kind of split the business down the middle, and Hobson closed up.

So, at that time I wasn't doing anything, wasn't hurting, but I wasn't doing anything. So, I went to work at the Riverside Hotel dealing "21" and the Wheel for a fellow by the name of Nick Abelman. And in the meantime my other brother-in-law, Sam Delich, had gone to Las Vegas. And he'd gotten this proposition in the El Dorado Club, which is now Binion's Horseshoe, to open up Faro Bank, and he called and asked if I wanted to come down there with him. I told him I was interested. Of course, I was still working at the Riverside at that time, and I quit my job there and went on into Las Vegas with him, and we opened up the Faro Bank in the El Dorado.

But it was kind of a comical thing. After I'd quit the Frontier, I went over and asked Bill Harrah for a job, and it was right next to the Frontier where Harrah's is now on Virginia Street. He eventually bought the Frontier. Anyway, went over and asked Bill for a job,

and he (of course, I got this second hand, but where I got it I have to believe it was true) had a fellow that used to be a shift boss here for us by the name of Bill Panelli, and he had charge of the Faro Bank games in Harrah's. They had Faro Bank. Warren Nelson was Bill Harrah's manager at the time. Warren also was my ex-brother-in-law who used to work here in the club. I think I mentioned that back a ways. So I got it second hand that Warren said to Bill Harrah, he said, "Yes," he says, "we can give him a job; we'll put him on the Faro Bank with Bill Panelli so Bill can carry him."

So, when I got this information I went right back to Bill Harrah, and I said, "Bill, I appreciate the fact that you interceded with Warren for me and got the job for me," I said, "but I don't need anybody to carry me, so thank you very much, but no thank you."

And that was the last I had to do with Bill Harrah or any of his operations. So I never worked for the man or anything else. Of course, Bill had a general manager and he had to stand behind him which was very good. And eventually Warren left Harrah's which is neither here nor there. Very, very comical because here's a fellow that worked with me here, all of a sudden he knew somebody that can carry me. But those are again the little vignettes of life. So that about did it with Reno as far as after the war and so on.

LAS VEGAS, 1948-1964

I moved to Vegas in March of 1948, and the town at that time was a growing town. They had just opened up the Golden Nugget, but most of the buildings along Fremont Street, which is the main street in town, were real old buildings. They still had the old Boulder Club, and the Las Vegas Club was way up the street towards the depot. And the old [El Dorado] Hotel, but all of the buildings were real old western town. And there wasn't anything big about the town at all. Where the Fremont Hotel is now there was a Shell service station and all little stores and stuff like that. They had, oh, the El Cortez Hotel, which was probably the leading hotel in town at that time down, way down the street quite a ways. They had a little cocktail lounge and so on and so forth. It's a pretty big establishment right now. And that was about all there was in the town. Where the El Dorado Club was downstairs was the—let's see, they had a little hotel up above it, and their little pawn shops and so on. But it was, oh, like Reno might have been back in the thirties. Everybody knew everybody. And oh, they had the Pioneer Club, and that was about it.

And leading figures were oh, the Moss brothers, Benny Binion at that time. There was Guy McAfee, Tutor Scherer, and they were all partners in the—went out from the Pioneer Club and went into the Golden Nugget.

And then the only places on the Strip were the El Rancho and the Frontier Hotel. That's all there was on the Strip. And there was an old two-lane highway; Highway 91 was an old two-lane highway.

And again, being in the gambling business, there wasn't too much social life insofar as we were concerned. The Mormons shied away from the gaming, so on and so forth. They had their own churches, their own social life. And being in the type of business I was, why you couldn't say there was any social life whatsoever like going out with people and so on. But you'd go to a show at the Frontier or at the El Rancho; they had their big name shows, as it were, in those days. And then they opened up the Flamingo and then the Thunderbird. So, the overall picture, you just sort of kept in your own bailiwick more or less.

But the politics—nobody bothered with politics at all. They had their sheriff, and they had their chief of police, and everything went along pretty nice. Nobody bothered anybody, and the town was very quiet. There was no roughhousing or anything like that. There wasn't too much of any crime, and they had the old—their house of prostitution out there—Roxie's they called it at the time. And later on the sheriff got mixed up in a little deal where he was supposed to get a piece of it or was taking some payoffs for it and it cost him his election and a few other things. Those are things that happen after more people start moving into the town, start opening up lids on pots and pans and seeing what was inside of them. But during that time between 1948 and oh, I'd say 1952, '53, why the town was very quiet. And like I say, nobody bothered anybody and everything went along nice and peaceful.

Now when you say attitudes towards the gambling industry, do you mean my attitudes?

... of the people in Las Vegas.

Oh, the people? The people accepted it, and there was no hue and outcry of trying to close the town up or anything like that. It was a money making endeavor insofar as the town was concerned. The taxes paid for a lot of things, and I never heard one word against gaming at all while I was in the town, and I mean even from the religious groups or anything else. They all knew that the town had to have something to bolster its economy because there wasn't any economy left there, you know after Boulder Dam was built, or the Hoover Dam as it was, why other than it being a stopover and people going from Los Angeles to Salt Lake. And I can tell you that now, the reason that Tom Hull built the El Rancho was, he was in the hotel business, and this is

a statement coming from him, in his travels between Los Angeles and Salt Lake, he looked at this oasis in the desert, as it were, and said, "This would be a good stopping-off place." He said, "I will build a hotel here for people to stay on their way through on Highway 91." And he did; he built the El Rancho.

The original El Rancho was a very small hotel, I think he built it in 1940, I think something like that, but I'm not sure of the date, but this is something that can be checked out—but when he built it, it was very small. And then I think I mentioned earlier in one of our other sessions that the Army came in and built some cottages all around on the property, for rest and recreation—a place for the officers when they came back from overseas. And then at the end of the war, when they didn't need this any more, why then they sold it to Tommy Hull or whoever was the owner at the time for one dollar apiece. And then they had all the little cottages out around there; it was really a beautiful place.

And as I say, as far as the citizens in the town, the church people and their attitudes towards the gambling industry, why they welcomed it. There was never anything ever said that would preclude them wanting it out. And the people who owned the establishments were possibly not invited into the social life, but they were respected people and nobody shunned them or anything. Each group had their own way of life, and they went about it, and nobody bothered anybody. Have to possibly equate it to—animals in a forest will kill each other for existence, but if you have a big forest fire, then it's all one common goal; and they all—I don't know if you've ever seen pictures of a forest fire where all the animals run away from the fire, but not one other animal bothers the other one. They're all running away from the fire, and they don't have time or the inclination to stop and fight

each other or anything else because they have a common goal and that's to get away from the danger. So this was Vegas in those days. They weren't about to upset any apple carts, and they all had a common goal—that was to bolster the economy of the town, and that was the way it was. People were very friendly—they were very helpful, and that is people from both sides, I mean from the gaming industry as well as people who were in business and so on and so forth. But they all sort of grew up together in the industry, and they all accepted it, not as something foreign that they didn't want or anything, but they just accepted it, period. Just like Reno accepts it now. Can you imagine what would happen to this whole state if gaming were to close tomorrow? I'll quote Governor Grant Sawyer when he was governor, he said, "If gaming were to close in the state of Nevada, the state of Nevada would not need a governor; it would need a caretaker." And that's fact. If you close gaming in the state of Nevada, what would you have?

Not much.

Not much, that's right. You have your railroads running through the middle of towns, if there were any towns. You have very light industry, if any. And I don't think Nevada could support heavy industry because they don't have the natural resources. Any kind of industry that would be here, if it were steel industry or anything like that, the ore would have to be trucked in or by freight and so on. I mean there's no proximity of anything to bolster any big business. Plus the fact that big business and recreation, no matter what, don't mix, and gaining especially because it—like in California they have their absenteeism from alcoholism; well, you can imagine what it would be if you had say a big Ford Motor plant or General Motors plant or General Electric or Westinghouse or

big manufacturing plants of some kind here. Okay, number one, your taxes would go up for the schooling and so on, and it would become an unbearable monster because then on top of that you would have people who were earning their living within the area gambling and losing their money. They wouldn't have money to feed their children, pay the rent, this, that and the other thing; so it would become a monster that you couldn't live with.

And then if you had that monster, which one's going to go? When you stop and think of the investments, if a big company came in here, invested, say a billion dollars now in these days, as opposed to the investment in a hotel or something like that, why the big companies would prevail upon, if not the local governments or the state government, they'd prevail upon the federal government to make sure that things were—and this is one of the reasons that I don't think gaming is going to flourish in New Jersey because of this very fact that I just mentioned now. And it's going to cause a big problem eventually. And here we have people who live in other parts of the country, different states, and they come here for a weekend or a week or two weeks even. They have so much money to spend, their vacation, and then when they go back home, whether they won or lost makes no difference because then they've got a year to work and make it up and they're not going to be hurt by it. But if they were here every day, again an old cliché, "desperation seizes the sucker," and he will try to come back day by day to recoup his losses or try to make the big hit. And that is where the problem begins. And like Las Vegas that has no industry, there's light industry and so forth, but it's mostly supportive businesses for the economy of the town or the town itself; what the town needs, small manufacturing plants, some of them related to the gaming industry, others not of course.

Now, running a Faro Bank game in the El Dorado in 1948 and '49. I think I told you a little bit about it before. We went down there with a fifteen thousand dollar bankroll, which my dad had cosigned a note for us here at the bank. And we made a deal with the Moss brothers who owned the El Dorado Club, and they paid us two thousand dollars a month. It was a reverse rental. They paid us two thousand dollars a month to bankroll the game, furnish the game, the dealers and so on and so forth and the bankroll. And whatever we made was ours. The only expenses we had back to the club, which really wasn't to the Mosses because the Silvagnis owned the bar, and that was the complimentary drinks that we served to our customers. We bought those from the bar.

And Faro Bank per se is a lost game. The percentage of the game is so very close that it's very difficult to make money with it. You have to be on top of it all the time, and you have to—I think I explained some of the game, didn't I?

Some—.

Yes, but it's a very even game, and many of the expressions that are used in the gaming business or even outside of the gaming business like—there's an old expression that they say, "getting down to cases" which means getting down to the nitty-gritty. I don't know if you ever heard the expression before or not. But in Faro Bank they have what they call a casekeeper and that keeps track of all the cards that come out. Casekeeper has the thirteen cards either engraved in wood on it or whatever, and it looks like a Chinese abacus. However, in front of each card there's four little buttons that you can slide along a wire, and well, say like on the ace, if the ace of spades shows, why you move that button.

Now the way you move the button is if, we'll say the ace of spades loses, why then you move the button completely over until it touches the back of the casekeeper. Now, we'll say that ace of hearts comes out, and it wins; well, then you move the next button but you leave an air space in between the two. And then we'll say the ace of diamonds loses; then you take the ace of diamonds and put it right next to the ace of hearts, so that your ace of spades you lost is right up against the back of the casekeeper. Then there's an air space between the ace of hearts and the ace of spades because the ace of hearts won.

And you keep track of all the cards in the whole deck that you have in a box, what they call a Faro box, and you shuffle the cards up and you shuffle them quite a bit, cut them, shuffle them; and then you put them in the box, and you face up. But the only card you can see is the first card on the deck because it sits in this little box with a rim around it. Then that card is the first visible card, and they call it the soda card. Now why they called it the soda card I don't know. I don't know where that derived from or anything else. Then what happens is the next two cards, one will win and one will lose. So, what you do is take and you push the soda card off, and you discard it over to one side. Then the next card—we'll say it's five of diamonds—it comes out and falls down, and you put it right down alongside the Faro box. That is the losing card, so the five of diamonds lost. And the next card that you see in the box we'll say is the nine of hearts. The nine of hearts is the winning card. So on the layout, the Faro Bank layout, you can bet a card to win or to lose. So, if you bet the card to win, you place your bet on the card. If you bet the card to lose, then you put on there what you call a copper which is a little octagon black piece of wood about a quarter of an inch thick. It has a little design on it and

so on. But anyway, and this again is another expression, of course it's in the vernacular of the gambling business, but when you say, "Somebody coppered me," well, they won and I lost. See what I mean? And then—so you go on through the deck that way.

Then people had different systems that they played like, if the first ace won, why then they'd bet the next one to lose—that one's called the break-even system. And then we'd have the break-off system, which if the first card won, well, then they'd bet the next card to win. You see, in other words, say break-even would mean one wins, one loses, one wins, one loses; and break-off would be that if the first one won, then they'd bet the next card of that denomination to win also. But they got into some pretty complicated systems also.

"Nick the Greek" played the high-low system. He would put a bet on every card, and you never knew what he was going to do. But he might bet every card—well, the layout was started from the ace, one, two, three, four, five, six. And then the seven would be over to just in between at the end, and then it would go eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve— eight, nine, ten, jack, queen, king. So there's thirteen cards in each unit. So he would maybe bet the—he'd never bet the seven, but he would bet the eight, nine, ten, jack, king, queen or the one, two, three, four, five, six. And he would take and maybe copper the high side, and when you bet the card to win, you say you "play" the card like you play the deuce or the trey or the four. Or if you copper it, it means you're betting it to lose. So he would bet, we'll say, all the low side to win and the high side to lose. And then you might make one turn of the card—this whenever you made it a deal or discarded a card and went to the next two cards, that's what you call a turn. So then the next turn, he would probably take the coppers and put them over on the high side, and play

the low side or vice versa. You never knew what he was going to play for that full deal. So there was no use even trying to manipulate the cards to try to beat him because that was his system. In other words there was no way in the world that you were ever going to outguess what he was going to do. No possible way. So it was strictly luck, one way or the other.

When I say "getting down to cases," there were four cards of every denomination, four aces, four deuces, four treys and so on. Well, the percentage of the game was where if it got down to what you call a double, well, a person would be silly to bet from the first card of each denomination, because you had four cards there and your chances of being split were very, very great. Being split means that two cards of the same denomination would—one would win and one would lose. The percentage of the game was, if one card of the same denomination won, and the other one lost, then you would take half of the customer's bet. That was the percentage that you had to work on. Okay? Clear as mud?

Right.

But you'd have to have a demonstration to really know what was going on. But anyway, now the expression, "getting down to cases." When you had one card left—we'll say the three aces had already played and you had one ace left in the box—then that was the case card or the case ace or the case deuce or whatever the denomination might be. And when you had that, then that was a dead even break that card could either win or lose, one or the other, because there was no way you were going to get split. So everybody would wait for a case to show on every card, and that's what made the game so difficult because we would force them to bet at least when there was a double in there, but otherwise we'd have no percentage.

By force you mean just make the rule that you must bet?

You must bet or don't play. You must bet the doubles or don't play because if you waited for every case, I couldn't pay my wages or anything because it was a dead even break, absolutely dead even. So that was the only percentage we had going for us. And then when you got down to the end of the deck, being fifty-two cards, and the soda card was discarded, that left you with fifty-one cards of play, correct? So, consequently when you got down to the end of the deck, if the casekeeper kept the cases right and so on and so forth, there would be three cards left. So, in being three cards left, there was the winner, the loser, and then the hock card, just like going to a hock shop, because that was the card in hock, and there was no action on it whatsoever. There couldn't be any action on it because there was no other card to go. Then you could call the last turn. You could, say there were three cards left in there, and if you called the way those cards came out in sequence, it paid two to one. There were three ways that they could come out, but it would pay two to one. And then there was—no wait a minute—let's see, there's three cards in there, and you could come out three ways, paid two and a half to one. Then there was a cat hop, what they call a cat hop, and that is that there were two cards of one denomination and one different, and they call that a cat hop. So then you could bet those that came out, like for instance if there was an ace and two deuces left in there, well then, you could bet it to come out ace-deuce or two deuces and that would pay two to one.

And we had one guy there I'll never forget. His name was Abe Shure, and he was quite a character. And he would sit there, and every time a cat hop came up, he would want to play it so that it would come out with the odd

card. In other words, if there were two deuces and an ace he would bet it would come out either deuce-ace or ace-deuce, but never the two cards coming out together. And every time that the two cards came out together like that, he'd get up, "aaah"—he'd just do like that [laughing]. He'd just get up and start to shake, "I knew it, I knew it, I shouldn't have bet it, I shouldn't have bet it!"

But every time this happened it was just beautiful to watch this man because you'd think he was going to have a heart attack because he knew he shouldn't have bet it, but he couldn't help himself. He had to bet it that way, and if he lost his money, I mean that was it, that was it. It was really something. Old Abe was quite a character.

We had a nucleus of probably the best Faro Bank dealers in the whole town. And we paid them well; they were good workers. They were honest. But like I say Faro Bank was a very, very close game percentage-wise, and while we operated it, well, from March until around December 1948, we got off about fifty thousand dollars winner with the game. And we just about paid off our note and everything else there at the bank.

However, along towards December, why the game started to go bad; Nick the Greek started winning and along with that a few other people started to win. And when everything's going out and nothing coming in, why it doesn't take too long for fifty thousand dollars to disappear. And it was January ninth of 1949, we were getting down pretty low, the bankroll and so forth. It's a question of—you know you're in the business, if somebody beats you out of something you like to be able to say, "Here's the cash," and pay them off. Well, we got down to the point of where it was nip and tuck; if somebody came in there and won five thousand dollars, we didn't have it to pay them off. So our bankroll got down to

about a thousand dollars, and we still had all that play; why just one morning along about three o'clock in the morning, my brother-in-law called me up and said, "We're broke. We have about a thousand dollars left. What do you want to do?"

I said, "Well, there's an old way of doing it, and that is when the game is over you just turn the box up on its back; that's it." So that was the death of the Faro Bank game, just turned the box over and said, "That's all fellows, sorry."

So we closed the game up, and that was it. January ninth of 1949, I had a hundred and forty dollars in cash, the rent paid for a half a month, and a wife and two kids. And between my brother-in-law and myself we owed fifteen thousand dollars to the bank. So, after we closed it up we had to go to work. Guess what my first job was? Nick the Greek took over the Faro Bank in the El Dorado, and I went to work for him dealing Faro Bank.

Now you can imagine my chagrin at sitting down there and working for him, and all the people that had been beating us right along, the tables turned, and I myself personally must have won; in my dealing—it was perfectly legitimate, no skulduggery whatsoever—I myself personally must have won a hundred and fifty thousand dollars for him. Oh yes, yes. And I worked for him—let's see, February until April, I forget what the dates were exactly; and he got in an argument with the people that owned the El Dorado, and he closed the game up. And he must have walked away from there maybe two hundred and fifty thousand dollars winner. So again out of a job. Fine.

So that was when I got my job in the El Rancho. And at that time the people in there, the two Halls, Vic and Joe Hall, and a fellow by the name of Barney Vanderstein, and Jake Katleman, and—can't think of his first name now—he had the Club Fortune up here for

a while, one of the original partners in the Palace Club here, Mr. Contratto—I forget what his first name was.

Jimmy?

Yes, Jimmy Contratto. And they were all in partners in the El Rancho. They had just bought it from the people that owned it before by the name of Resnick and Adler. But at that time a fellow by the name of Joe Drowns out of San Diego owned the El Rancho property, and Wilbur Clark had owned it before that. Why all these changes I don't know, but when I say owned it, I don't know whether they owned the physical property or not. But when I was there this fellow Joe Drowns from San Diego had owned the property and when he leased it out to Jake Katleman and these other people, in the lease there was an option to buy for one million five hundred thousand dollars, which is—now that property is worth God only knows how much. But at that time—I mean you know things were—well, you don't recall, you're too young, but we had just emerged from the Depression to a war, to the end of the war and a postwar season which was practically back to depression again. In 1945 to the early fifties things weren't that plush in this country, and a million-five for that property then was a lot of money.

But anyway, on May the ninth of 1949 I went to work in the El Rancho for the Katlemans and all the other people. And I went to work dealing "21," and of course they had Crap games, "21" games, Wheel. Things were just beginning to loosen up a little bit you know, and money was becoming a little looser, and there were a lot of people from the Los Angeles area that had, you know, made it big during the war, and they were coming up there gambling, gambling pretty high. A lot of very wealthy people used to come up and play.

And the method of operation was of course completely foreign to what we were used to operating, the way we were used to operating up here in Reno. It was a different type of customer—they were more genteel people and you treated them as such. And there was never any hue or cry about winning or losing. There was quite a bit of money beginning to show around, and the method of operation was that these people were to be treated like ladies and gentlemen, and we'd be treated likewise. But the method of operation was such as you would operate a big business. The customer is your prime target to please and so on.

And they had of course in those days "name" shows in the different establishments, and they only kept them for one or two weeks and then they'd change. And of course there were only the two hotels open, so they had plenty to draw from, you know. And the prices for these people were not that big, just like when the Sands opened up and Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis; why they were at that time nobodies. And the prices they paid for them were minimal as compared to what they're paying now for entertainment.

But we had in those days, Harry Belafonte was just starting out and gosh, Beatrice Kay and Joe E. Lewis, the comic, Lily St. Cyr; Milton Berle used to play us, Harvey Stone; I can go back and think of all the different people—the Jewish storyteller, Myron Cohen, and all those people. The most the show would last would be two weeks and then they'd change and have somebody else. Now shows last for God knows how long down there like Hallelujah Hollywood and the Lido show at the Stardust and those; they're a year or two-year productions, and they just stay there and stay there and stay there. And people go back and see them over and over and over again.

Their policies of operation and their method of operation, of course they sort of

go hand in hand, but everything to please the customer because so many times in the gambling business why it's kind of a dog eat dog thing, but they were starting to get so much business there that it wasn't a question of whether somebody won or lost any more; it was a question of how often they would come back, and they would eventually beat them anyway. So if they won it was just good advertising for them, but win or lose it was treat them nice, bend over backwards to treat the customer nice. And believe me, you can see Las Vegas today; it works.

Of course Las Vegas in the last couple or three years has taken a different turn where they act like they're doing you a favor to wait on you, deal to you; I mean this goes back throughout the whole gamut of the operation from the taxi driver from the airport to the dealer who deals "21" to you or Roulette or the bellboy—everybody had their hand out, and they're doing you a favor to wait on you. But it's changed now because they saw where it was starting to hurt their business, but this will come again later. But in those days the customer was the prime person that was to be pleased.

If you had an argument with a customer, you were more apt to get fired than the customer would be told he was wrong even if he was wrong. So you minded your Ps and Qs, and of course that's what made Las Vegas what it is. So, that I think sort of sums up the method of operation and the policies.

Well, as I said before, after we went broke on the Faro Bank game in the old El Dorado Club, why that was January ninth of 1949; and as I said, I went to work for Nick the Greek. And he lasted let's see, January until about April, about three months; and then he got in an argument with the people and so he closed the game up and I went around looking for a job. Well, I finally got a job in

the El Rancho. I think I mentioned the people that owned it at the time, and I went to work as a “21” dealer. So, I might add, tongue-in-cheek, I was probably as good a “21” dealer as there was in the whole town of Las Vegas or the state of Nevada. And I say this because when I was working in here with my father, I made it a point to learn every game from top to bottom, how to deal it in the most efficient way. So consequently I went to work and was very well thought of, and was never bothered by any of the bosses or anything because they knew that I knew as much as they did and could protect the game from cheaters and so on, which I had a few incidents, incidents in which I did protect the game from cheaters, knew the cheaters and also their method of operation and so on.

And, I was very well liked by the customers also. I always had a beautiful rapport with the ladies, and usually I would have a table full of ladies on the “21” game because I would joke with them and kid with them you know. And their husbands would be shooting Craps or something like that, and I’d keep them occupied and interested. And it worked out real good. And I got to know all of the customers in the El Rancho, and I was very well thought of by many, many people that came up there; and sometimes the customers themselves would invite me out to dinner, myself and my wife. [I had] very good rapport with the customers and also with the bosses in the El Rancho.

And then after a while that I was there, Jake Katleman, who was the majority stockholder and the boss of the El Rancho, was going out to the airport with the security officer in a station wagon to pick up a customer or to meet a customer, and they had a slight accident. And lo and behold, he hit his knee against the glove box of the station wagon, and the man was diabetic, started a clot in

his leg, and he died, just from that simple little accident.

Of course, that left now the Katleman family, as opposed to the other partners that were in the El Rancho, and it was a question of buy or sell at that time because when Jake was gone, why then the other partners didn’t want to have anything to do with the rest of the Katleman family; and they in turn didn’t want to have anything to do with the rest of the partners. So it was a question of buy or sell, and Beldon Katleman, Jake’s nephew, came up with the asking price, and he bought out all the other partners, and he became the sole boss of the El Rancho.

And as far as interesting customers, well, many, many movie stars used to come in there. And of course at that time there’s just the El Rancho and the Frontier and the Flamingo. But we used to get a lot of movie stars come in, the Gabor sisters and oh, Natalie Wood, Elizabeth Taylor, several of the big name stars in those days. And well, let’s see Beldon was married to the daughter of the president of Columbia Pictures at that time. And all of those people used to come up and some of them quite heavy players and other of them not—used to deal to all of them. As a matter of fact, I dealt to Howard Hughes. He came up one day; I was dealing “21,” and he was in his sneakers and this pair of old white duck pants and came over and bet a dollar back and forth on “21” game; but [I] never saw him gamble really, just betting a dollar back and forth. Very pleasant person, though, didn’t say much—very, very quiet; but he just bet his dollar back and forth, and everybody said, “That’s Howard Hughes, that’s Howard Hughes!”

I said, “So, it’s Howard Hughes; he’s betting his dollar, so I will deal to him.” I said, “There’s nothing to get excited about or anything.”

Of course, celebrities don't mean that much to me really. I mean they're human beings, and like I say I always got along with everybody and didn't make over them or ask them for their autographs or anything else because it just didn't mean that much to me. They had a gay old time.

Now Carl Cohen was not there when I first went to work there, but Carl came in over a situation that happened on the graveyard shift in the El Rancho whereby some people came in and put in what we call "mis-spotted dice," and two nights in a row they were able to manipulate the dice into the game and they won ten thousand two nights going. So when they finally found out what had happened—a mis-spotted die is a dice that cannot show a seven. In other words, it's got what we call double fives, so ten can show all the time, but has no deuce on it, has double tours, and without any threes, and double sixes, but with no aces so that there can be no seven showing. Eleven can show. The only thing that the customer would have against him would be the two sixes where he would lose his bet on the front line. But other than that they could never show a seven.

Vic Hall, who is a good friend of mine, showed me the dice that they took off the table. And they were beautiful dice except they were just mis-spotted. So they, shall we say, subpoenaed Carl Cohen from Palm Springs—he was living in Palm Springs at the time—and he came up and took charge of the graveyard shift and eventually became the casino manager under Beldon Katleman.

And I had good rapport with Carl; he was a very fair boss, very nice man. In fact he's still alive (I still know him) and married, had two boys. One became an attorney, I believe, and the other one is in the movie business.

Now promotions—there's another strange thing. I worked in the El Rancho from 1949

until 1957 when I left, and I don't know why, but for some reason or other people (maybe because of my affable attitude or whatever), but sometimes people (perhaps even jealousy), I don't know; I have to believe part of it was—but in promotions along the way, I stayed as a "21" dealer for a long, long time. Every time a promotion came up, why it was always a friend of somebody's or something else or if a guy couldn't do the work, they'd kick him upstairs. of course this is typical in the Army too, you know; if a lieutenant can't do the job, why they make a captain out of him; if they can't do the job as a captain, they kick him up and make a major out of him and so on. But I stayed there and dealt as a "21" dealer for a long, long time.

And one day, I can kind of equate it to the time that they wanted me to type in the Army, they came over and asked me if I could deal Craps. I said, "Oh, no. I know a Craps game very well," I said, "but I can't do it. I haven't dealt it in such a long time; I don't think I could handle it. I'll just stay over here dealing '21'"

They said, "Well, we need a Crap dealer. We'll take this guy; he'll deal Craps"—I forget what the fellow's name was—"and you sit down and be a boxman."

I said, "Fine, nice easy job." So that was a promotion. I became a boxman. That's the man who sits in between the Crap dealers and watches the game.

So without having to deal Craps, I was promoted to the box, as it were. And I stayed there for quite a long time. Again, without trying to brag or anything else, I knew Craps as well as anybody in the state of Nevada. So, when they saw the work that I did on the Craps, they decided that what they would do is let me work three days a week, as it were. I would start in Friday afternoon and work for twelve hours like from four o'clock on Friday

afternoon until four o'clock in the morning, then go back, go to bed, come back at twelve o'clock Saturday and work until sometimes four o'clock the next morning. And then Sunday morning came back at twelve o'clock and get off about eight o'clock that night. But that was the extent of my work. In other words, I'd do it all in a weekend. And then they would take—and this is fact—they would take their worst dealers that they had in the place—of course, they knew that they could work them those hours because they couldn't work anyplace else—and they would give them to me.

So I really had to deal the game and watch it at the same time. But I didn't mind this because I don't mind work, never have minded work; I love work. And I love to be able to see that everything goes all right and maybe take these people and help them, possibly. And I was able to help quite a few of them and make good dealers out of them. But I called them my "twelve o'clock high crew." If you go back to the picture *Twelve O'clock High* or the book, you'll find where I think Gregory Peck played in the picture, and he was sent to a bomber group because there was something wrong with the morale and they were having a lot of losses and so on and so forth. So when he got in there (course most people remember *Twelve O'clock High*) —when he got in there and he saw what was happening, why they had a bunch of goof-offs, we'll call them, and he took them—all of the bad personnel that they had in every other group—and he put them all in one bomber. And then he told them, he says, "Now I'm going to call this bomber the 'Ruptured Duck,' and any one of you makes a mistake in here—and I know you're all capable of making mistakes, very bad ones—you're going to kill all the rest of these guys."

So strangely enough as the picture went on, anytime a guy would get over his sentence,

you might say, and he would become a good man—they'd take him out and put in another burn in there. So they always had the "Ruptured Duck" with the twelve o'clock high crew. But we got along real good, and a lot of them became very good dealers. Some of them never did, but—.

Now during that time before Beldon came on the scene, one of the partners Leo Kind, who's dead now—his son was in charge of the slot machines, and of course as I told you before, I learned every facet of the gambling business that there was. The slot machines, I told you I started working on those in 1932. So when Leo cut out, why his son went with him. They had nobody to maintain their slot machines, so along with my dealing—now this happened while I was still dealing—along with my dealing I had charge of all the slot machines, the repair and so on and so forth. Of course, the money was good, and I worked roughly twelve hours a day. But I had a good job, and they were satisfied with my work, and like I say I don't mind working.

So we went on that way for a long, long time, and then from the box, after they had exhausted all of their friends and everything, why they eventually promoted me to become a floorman, pit boss or floorman, whichever you want to call it. And I stayed at that job for quite some time. And then I worked all the shifts, and as a matter of fact, again without bragging, I don't like to say this, but it's fact, I carried some of the people that—like I said with Warren Nelson saying somebody could carry me—I carried a lot of their friends down there that didn't know which end was up. But everything worked all right.

So from there I had the dubious distinction of being the only person that was promoted to be a shift boss in Las Vegas and then fired from New York. I'll explain that to you. They had an opening for a shift boss on the

graveyard shift, so one of the fellows there by the name of Jack Wear, who [was] a very good friend of mine—very superstitious person. But talk about character sketches, I'll go into Jack in a moment.

But anyway, I'll go back, have to regress here a little bit. The reason I got from the box to the floor was through Jack Wear, and as I said, Jack Wear was a—I'll just have a paragraph on him. He's dead now also, but Jack was a very superstitious man, and there was a dealer (I was on the box) by the name of Jim Katzman. And these things can be verified—Jim is still down there in Vegas working. He's a floorman now. And Jack always felt that Jim Katzman was a very unlucky stickman. Now these things happen in this business. It's very superstitious type of business. But Jack decided that Jim was unlucky for him, so on his own he took Jim and put him on the box so he wouldn't be on the stick and calling the dice and put me on the floor. And then of course he went to Beldon Katleman, told him what he did and told him why.

So Jim Katzman, from there on out, and I called each other "Benny," and the reason was that Jim was my benefactor by being an unlucky stickman on the Craps; he got my job and It got the promotion to the floor. So every time we see each other even to this day, we call each other Benny; we were benefactors to each other [chuckles]. But you wanted a character sketch; there's a good one for you, and—let's see where was I before that? The promotion to the shift. Okay.

So they needed a shift boss, of the graveyard shift, so there's a fellow by the name of Hymey Portnoy; he's a real nice guy—he's dead now also—I've buried a lot of people [chuckling]. Hymey was a shift boss, and Jack recommended me for the job. So, fine, thank you very much. So that night I came to work on the graveyard shift.

Beldon said, "Okay, fine, good." He had to go to New York for something.

So when Hymey found out that I was going to be the shift boss on the graveyard shift, this is the story I got; whether it's true or not or whether it was Hymey or not, I don't know for sure, but I have to assume that it was, because he immediately came afterwards and told me that it wasn't him that did it. But, somebody told Beldon in New York, they said, "Beldon, I don't know, I don't know about leaving that—" (this is the exact words) "that kid on the graveyard shift all by himself. I don't think he can protect it," and so forth.

So all of a sudden I'm working the shift, and they called in Jimmy Brown. Jimmy was a very good friend of mine. As a matter of fact, he dealt the wheel, the Roulette Wheel, here for my dad back in the thirties. And Jimmy came in all of a sudden, said, "Well," he said, "I'm sorry," he said, "but I've been told to relieve you; you go back to your old job."

I said, "That right?"

"Yes

I said, "Thank you very much. It's all yours." I said, "This is what's happened up to now," and I just walked out.

So the next day they called me up. I didn't go to work the next day, you know. They said, "What's the matter?"

Said, "Nothing really the matter; evidently my work is not good enough for you people, so consequently I just left." I said, "You had a man come in and relieve me; evidently I wasn't good enough to work for you, so I just left."

"Oh no, come back, come back. It was a whole mistake," and everything else. (Of course, this particular shift job was just temporary one, you know, just for two or three days because somebody was sick. I forgot to tell you that.) But, "Oh no, come back, it was a mistake," and, "It wasn't meant to be; it was

just something that somebody went and told Beldon,” and so on and so forth.

So after we talked for a while, why I went on back. From there on out, why there was just a little bit of bad feeling in the place. But that’s not the whole situation as to why—I’ll give you my motives for leaving the El Rancho a little later on.

But anyway, I’ll go back, I’ll give you a little dissertation on Jack Wear. Jack had worked with Jake Katleman many years ago as a partner down in Palm Springs when gambling was condoned there. And Jack was a very astute man, and he was a loner, never married, and he lived his work. But he was a very superstitious person. He—and these again are facts—he slept with black sheets and black pillow cases. He had a Ouija board; he used to talk to his old partner up on cloud eight or call it heaven or whatever you want to call it. And superstitious as all get out as far as the gaming business was concerned. If the dice would start passing or something, he would pick out different people and wouldn’t put them on the stick because they were unlucky dice callers. And he’d sit on the box, and he put two sets of three coins, one on each side, silver dollars—in those days we had silver dollars—and put them close together, and then he’d put a dollar on top and that would make a seven show on the dice, you see, when the customer rolls the dice. Oh yes, we had characters like that, believe me. But aside from that (these were the idiosyncrasies), Jack was not a crazy man, but he was just a superstitious man, period. And everybody, you know, kidded about it, but that’s beside the point. He was a good man; he was an honest man, and he watched Mr. Katleman’s money like—well, I don’t watch my own that close. So, but that was Mr. Wear.

But as I say, he liked me, and I kidded him one day for some reason or other; some fellow

was playing and won ten thousand dollars on a “21” game. Well, Jack didn’t know really whether he got cheated or what happened. I was at home, and he called me up, he says, “Sil, you’ve got to come down here.” So I came down. This was before I went on the floor or anything.

I came down, said, “What is it, Jack?”

He said, “Well,” he said, “this guy has beat us.” He said, “I want you to deal to him, and I want you to see what’s happening.” So lo and behold, I went in and dealt to the man, and before you knew it, I had won back the whole ten thousand except for about six hundred dollars. There was nothing wrong; the guy just got lucky, that’s all, period. And when it just so happened that when I dealt to him, the game took hold and of course, that made me a hero, as it were. So the fellow quit with six hundred and walked over to the Crap game or something.

So Jack come over, he says, “You did a very good job.”

“Thank you very much, Jack.” I said, “You know,” I said, “he left with six hundred.”

He says, “I know.”

I said, “Well, why didn’t you stop him?” I said, “I probably could have won the other six hundred.”

“How can I stop him?!” [Laughing] But I was just kidding him. But that was one of the things—that Jack was really something!

So I worked along for a long, long time that way, and everything was going along real good. And a strange thing happened; all the time that I was promoted from the box to the floor and so on, why, I still had charge of the slot machines, so I had to have my times that I came in there to repair the slot machines. Well, that was fine.

And now I’m going into my motives for leaving. I noticed—of course, this was after Carl Cohen had left; he’d gone. Carl and

Beldon had gotten into a little argument, and Carl left and went to the Sands, and a fellow by the name of Alec Goldfine became the casino manager. Now Alec and I became very, very good friends, and we got along real well. Of course, Alec was a worker just like myself, and he liked me for that reason. Alec is still alive, very sick man right now.

But I noticed that there was something real strange going on in the place; it's something that we in this business call grit-sense. You have a feeling that something is going on, and yet you don't know what it is, you know. So looking around one day, I was working swing shift at the time, and I'd come in about two o'clock in the afternoon, check over all the machines and repair whatever had to be repaired and so on and so forth, and then go home, change and come back to work that night. So, one day I came in, and I saw the sheriff now in Las Vegas, Ralph Lamb (was with the sheriff's department earlier), and Lloyd Bell, who has a brother who's an attorney, Tom Bell, down there. Lloyd Bell was with the sheriff's department, and I think Lloyd was married to Ralph Lamb's sister or something; there was some relationship. But anyway, I'm minding my own business, and I come in and I see Ralph.

Now Ralph had left the sheriff's department and started his own private detective agency at that time. So as I walked in, I said, "Hi, Ralph, how's things going?" And walked on in. But he had another fella sitting in the car with him. So I walked on in, did my work, went on home, changed, came on back. Well things, you know, just didn't jell. So I said, "Okay, something is wrong, and I know it, but I don't know what yet."

So when I'd get through work at night, then I sensed that I was being followed. So what I would do is before I went home, I'd

just get in my car, and I'd go for a ride maybe up to Nellis Air Force Base or something, and just take a nice long ride for about an hour or hour and a half. And then I knew I was being followed, but then I'd go home, park my car and go on to bed.

So this went on for quite a while. One day Alec said, "I'm going to tell you a story." He says, "First you're going to laugh, and then you're going to get mad."

I said, "Well," I said, "I know something's been going on here, but," I said, "I want to know what it is anyway." So I said, "Go ahead and tell me the story."

"Well," he said, "they caught two slot machine thieves at the Flamingo. And," he said, "in so doing why one of the slot machine thieves stated that he was also (in our vernacular) taking off the El Rancho. And he knew the man who was in charge of the slot machines, and the man told him that whatever he did, he had to do it before two o'clock in the afternoon, but once he came in at two o'clock in the afternoon, to just back away and stay out of there."

I said, "What?"

He said, "Yes, but wait a minute, let me tell you the whole story."

So I said, "All right, go ahead." So at that time I said, "That why Lamb was out there?"

"Yes." Okay, fine.

So what happened was, that they had a shill; a shill is a person, a game starter, as it were. And lo and behold he couldn't quite pass for my twin brother, but he did look like me, and he noticed what was going on with the slot machines before I came in. So he went to the slot machine thieves and he told them that they were free to work, manipulate the slot machines or cheat them until two o'clock in the afternoon, and then from two o'clock in the afternoon, they had to back away. And he cut himself in.

But the thing was that my reputation, integrity and what have you depended on one of those slot machine thieves, because Ralph Lamb, having left the sheriff's department, having his own private detective agency, through, I have to assume, Lloyd Bell who was still with the sheriff's department, was able to get this thief out of jail and bring him down in his car to identify me as I walked in. And luckily enough the thief said, "No, that's not the man."

So then they said, "Well, point out the man to us." And they pointed out the shill.

So, from that time on, well, even though I was exonerated, I could see that there was very little trust as far as I was concerned or maybe it said, "Well, maybe this thing could happen," you see. So they brought in a fellow by the name of Keith Camel to take charge of the slot machines and so on. They didn't actually fire me from the slot machines, but they brought him in to help me, as it were, they said. So that was fine.

Now we come along, and things are going along pretty well. I hadn't left yet, but I had already received an offer from the Fremont Hotel to go up there. And I hadn't made up my mind whether I was really going to go or not because I thought, you know, it was all over with after this incident. As a matter of fact, I had a long talk with Ralph Lamb in a car one night, and I told him I said, "You're barking up the wrong tree when you're after me because I'm not going to stand for it and I mean it."

Well, Ralph was sitting in the car looking up at the stars. I said, "Don't look at the stars, you'd better look at me because I mean it." I said, "I was born and raised in this state," and I said, "and you know from whence I come, so don't fool with me," I said, "because I'm not the one that's going to be sorry." This is fact. Ralph is the sheriff down there; he'll tell you the same thing.

Of course, we became friends afterwards, didn't make any difference. But it still rankled me that a man could walk in and take a prisoner out of jail to bring him down to identify me. The normal situation would have been to bring me up there. However, they really didn't have anything on me, which proved itself out later.

So then the greatest one though was not too long after that; I was—and again like I say, the way you find things out is through a dealer or a customer or something like that; they're your best stool pigeons. And I was working the pit. In those days we worked with cowboy clothes on, and you know wearing a pair of cowboy pants, why the pockets are real tight on you and so on. Of course I was, again, in good shape in those days, had a pretty good frame on me, and I wore my clothes kind of tight. So, I was working the pit and again, grif-sense. I walked into the back office, and this is the thing—I used to count their money for them. Of course there were three or four of us counting, but that's beside the point. They used to bring me in to count the money at the end of the shift and so on and so forth.

So I walked in one day, and I saw two of the daily game sheets for a certain date, and I looked at them; it was on the swing shift. So knowing what goes on, they had to have those game sheets out for a reason. And again I was getting that kind of a cold attitude—there was just something that told me there was something wrong. But I'm getting ahead of my story. Why, one of the dealers came to me and told me that there was a certain fellow in there—I won't mention his name; he's also dead—that was stealing halves. This fellow was on the floor, but he was stealing halves out of the trays and then making a fill later on for more halves and getting the dealer to sign for it. Well, when I found out about this, I was working down in the Crap pit, and this fellow

was working in the “21s” of course. But the dealer came to me; he says, “I got to protect myself.” He says, “It’s making my percentage look bad, and,” he says, “I don’t want to lose my job over this.”

I said, “Okay, just forget about it.”

So this just happened so quick, I didn’t have any time to do anything about it because what I wanted to do was catch it myself, but I couldn’t; I didn’t have the time. So anyway, it came about where one of the other floormen happened to catch it also, and we discussed it. So, figured we’d have to do something about it, but during that time, one day Alec Goldfine asked me—the other floorman that I’d talked to, his name was Vince Howard; he also died (you know, I don’t know how I’ve lived so long). But it got quiet around there, and Vince had something to do the next day, so Alec Goldfine came to me and said, “I want you to leave the Crap pit and go up into the ’21’ pit, and let Vince go home.” He says, “You’ll work over there with Roger.” I’ll just go as far as Roger with the guy; that’s his first name.

So I said, “I don’t want to go up there.”

And (this is the way they think) he says, “What’s the matter, are you mad at Vince?”

I didn’t want to go up there and work with Roger, so that should have been an indication right there that there was something wrong, right? But, [he] didn’t even tumble to it at all. So that was fine. So, “I just won’t go up there, period, that’s all.” So, they sent somebody else up, and I stayed down in the Craps.

Well, I guess the next day Vince went to Alec and told him what was going on up there. So, that’s fine. They fired Roger. And in the meantime, we get back to the two sheets in the cashier’s cage. I said, “Alec,” I said, “there’s something wrong here; I want to know what it is.”

Well, some supposedly stool pigeon had gone to Beldon and told him that—. Each shift

the games would open up with a full bankroll. So what we would do is put an opening slip in the can. So, got quiet around seven o’clock or so; I’d go around and put the opening slip in every can. Some of the games were closed at that time because people were in the show and so on, so [they] had a towel over the bankroll. So I’d just go around, put my opening slips in there, go on about my business. So the stool pigeon went to Beldon and said that I went to these two games and took two hundred dollars worth of five dollar chips and put them in my pocket and put a fill slip in the game for the two hundred dollars—that I had filled the game two hundred dollars in chips.

Now the days in question were the sheets that were out in the cashier’s cage. And luckily enough for me, on both of those days, that particular game did not have any fills whatsoever, during the whole shift, even though the fill slips were timed, you know, as they went out. Not one fill during the whole shift, either game. Plus the fact that I would be very hard put to put two hundred dollars worth of five dollar chips. Well, you can see with these baggy pants, my money’s showing right through here, right? Imagine two hundred dollars in five dollar chips in one of those pockets, how they would show. Okay. It was comical, really. But, then they fired Roger, and Alec said, “How do you like that?”

I said, “Yes,” I says, “pretty good, Alec.” I said, “You people,” I said, “you go after a man that watched your money and did everything in the world to protect the place, and you let somebody else do this to you and thinking it was me.” I said, “Don’t you think this—aren’t you a little bit ashamed?” I said, “You should be,” I said, “you and Mr. Katleman both.”

So in the meantime I’d firmed up my deal to move to the Fremont. So two or three days later I went to Mr. Katleman, and I said, “Beldon,” I said, “I’m going to have to leave.”

He said, "What's the matter?" He says, "Who's bothering you?"

I said, "Nobody's bothering me, Beldon," I said, "but I don't want to work for a man that doesn't trust me." I said, "And you don't trust me."

"What do you mean I don't trust you?"

So I went on, told him, I said, "I'm very well aware of everything that's happened here." I said, "Beldon, I've never stolen your money, never had any intention to." I said, "All I ever wanted to do was work for you." I said, "But evidently that's not good enough for you." "So you deserve what you get." I said, "No hard feelings, but goodbye and good luck." And that's when I went to the Fremont. So, my motives for leaving the El Rancho.

So I went to the Fremont Hotel, and it was like a revelation getting in there and just being on my own. I was a shift boss there, and I bought a half a percent which was ten thousand dollars at the time, and I was a shift boss there. The Fremont was to all intents and purposes a new hotel in town, and it had all the games that all the other places had, but it was downtown. Customers were a little different. The downtown customers are not the same as the Strip customers; they're a different class of people. They're nice people, don't misunderstand, but it's a cheaper type of play. But they were good customers and very affable people and I got along real good with them all. I was able to do my work, and nobody bothered me; I loved it, just got along real good.

And their method of operation was much different than the El Rancho where everybody was suspicious of everybody. In other words, you were there, you did your work, you showed results, that was it. Nobody bothered you. So, and that was their policy, their method of operation and their policy. I went in there in September and I

was there until May, I think, of the next year. I was there seventh of September—I worked through March. And actually I didn't have any experiences there. It was a very pleasant experience all the way through, and the bosses and everybody, they respected me. They respected me for my experience and the work I could do, and it was just a complete turnaround from what happened with me in the El Rancho.

And I enjoyed working there. Interesting customers—I can't say that there were any interesting—it was just all more or less the same. And I worked there with people who I'd worked with in Reno and throughout the spectrum of my experience in the gambling business. So it was a much friendlier place, and I didn't stay there too long.

And the motive for my leaving was when I was there I called up Ruby Kolod, who was a good friend of mine at the Desert Inn, for a reservation for some people that wanted to go see their show. And in an endearing sort of way Ruby said, "You bum, you." He said, "What did you leave the El Rancho for?" He said, "I had you all set up to go into the Stardust as a shift manager."

And I said, "You what?"

He says, "I had you all set up to go to the Stardust as a shift manager;" he says, "possibly later on be able to buy in."

I said, "Well, it's not too late." Said, "I'm not all that happy up here, you know." [Chuckles]

So, "Well, we'll talk more about it."

So I went down and talked to him, and I could see not only the opportunity of advancing myself to a higher position—and of course I'd worked the Strip all my life and I like the Strip; I like the people out there. So, I went over and talked to Ruby, and I said, "Actually, Ruby, I wish I had known that you were intending to call me from the El Rancho; I would have stayed there; I would

have swallowed my pride and stayed there until you did call me. However," I said, "I'm up here now," I said, "but I would like to go with you people because I know what kind of an operation you conduct and so on."

So, he says, "Okay, we'll be opening in July of 1958, and you can tell the people there at the Fremont that you're going to come with us. You have the opening."

So, I went to Levenson, and I said, "Eddie, I have this opportunity and I'd like to leave you."

Well, all hell broke loose, I guess, because next thing I know was they called me from the Desert Inn and said, "Better stay where you are."

And I said, "I don't want to stay where I am."

And they said, "We'll see what we can do."

I got it from very good authority that Mr. Levenson, who was the head guy at the Fremont, told the Desert Inn people that they were taking my best man, and they never had anybody like me there and he wanted to keep me.

So they said, "Yes, that's very true, but Eddie, the man has a chance to better himself out here with us and so on, so why don't you let him go?"

So Eddie decided it'd be all right. And I left the Fremont about two months before the Stardust opened, went out there, just worked around the Stardust, acquainted myself with the whole area and everything. And July the second of 1958, we opened up the Stardust Hotel.

And again, the description of the place—it was huge. It was the biggest casino in Las Vegas at the time. And the customers, of course, were all our old Strip customers. They don't change too much except you get more of them. But then that period why we used to start getting a lot of people from

back East. They'd come on junkets and a lot of people would come from different areas of the East and all over the United States. And, but again, they were still all the same kind of people, and their method of operation was absolutely impeccable. Everything was just done right down by the numbers. Everybody knew where they were going, what they were doing at all times twenty-four hours a day.

And I was instrumental in being part of the casino management of the Stardust to implement some of my own ideas, and they just let me have a free rein, completely free rein with the thing. And they never asked any questions; if something came up, they said, "It's your baby, you handle it, all we want is results," and they got results. They got a lot of results.

From the day we opened the place we never looked back. It was just as though the place had been open for ten years, not a bobble, nothing; absolutely nothing went wrong. Just a beautiful experience to be able to do that with such a big establishment. And their policies were that the customer was to be treated just like a king, because they wanted him back.

They had cheap rooms. They had a lot of rooms, had almost a thousand rooms which was big for Las Vegas in those days. They had some cheap rooms and they had some expensive rooms, of course. And they had good food, nothing pretentious on the food, but it was real good food at a popular price; and well, we not only got the tourist, the traveler, the person who came from Los Angeles, but we also got a lot of the local people coming out there.

And one thing that I have to mention now is that Keno had been tried on the Strip, the Las Vegas Strip, a couple of times and just didn't go; something happened, I don't know why, what or how. But, I asked Mr. Kolod

when they had decided that I was going to come with them, if they were going to have Keno in the Stardust, and he said absolutely. He said, "But we're pretty hard pressed at this time because we don't know anybody who knows the game or can protect us.

And I said, "I'm your man."

"What do you mean?"

I said, "I was the first man to have Keno in the state of Nevada."

He says, "You're kidding."

I said, "No," I said, "I was the first man to have Keno in the state of Nevada; your worries are over.

He says, "Thank God."

And from that day on he said, "You pick your people, set the game up; from now on," he says, "are you sure we're going to be protected?"

I said, "There's no question in my mind that you're going to be protected," I said, "because I'm going to implement a system in here that will be second to none!"

So, I was able to design and implement my camera system, my camera protection system in the Keno, and they let me bring in my own Keno manager; we trained our own people, and I told them that after the game was open for about six months that I expected that we would be writing a gross write of about ten thousand dollars a day, which was in those days—1950—was a pretty big write. That was just about what they were doing downtown in the old established games. And lo and behold it was within two months that we were writing ten thousand a day, and that was the first successful Keno game on the Strip. And I'm kind of proud to say that I was the man that designed it, protected it, and it was very successful.

I left the Fremont as we know to go to the Stardust. And the Stardust was originally built by a fellow by the name of Tony Cornero

who used to have the gambling on the boats just off of Long Beach, and of course the government closed them up. And they used to transport people on small motorboats out to the big ship, called it the *Rex*, and they'd have gambling on there which was outside the—I think in those days it was a three-mile limit or zone where the government had any jurisdiction. And of course they made it the twelve-mile limit, and they closed them up. That was the end of it.

So, but anyway he floated a big stock deal and a lot of people bought stock in the Stardust, and he started to build it. But one day while the Stardust was being built, why he dropped dead at a Crap table at the Desert Inn, and then all the stockholders were left holding the bag; the project stopped, and it just stayed dormant on the Strip for about three years. And then the Desert Inn people along with the Factors (Max Factor who is the big make-up king) bought it and finished it. And at that time why they recruited top people from all different casinos for their management team, which I was one. I originally left the El Rancho, as you know, and went to the Fremont, and then they recruited me from there. They had intentions of recruiting me right from the El Rancho, but I left earlier than expected. I think I told that story.

We're talking about the Stardust and what happened with Tony Cornero, and so they called me from the Fremont to go out there, and I think I told you this story before. So I went on out there about two or three months before it opened, and the management team got together, and we got all the people that we needed to work and so on and so forth. And we had the usual games, the "21s" and the Wheel, the Craps, and they had the Big Six or something.

It's hard to describe the operation of a gambling house, but I would say about five

years previous to that, gaming had come into its own to the point of where you ran it like a business, not like they did back in the thirties or the twenties where everybody had their bankroll in their pocket and so on and so forth. We went to computers, and we ran credit operations in the pit for people. It was run like a big business. And actually it's really the only way to run a gambling house or any other kind of business. You just have to work on percentage and volume and so on. Of course we had, oh, I think in those days, five or six hundred slot machines which was a great amount of slot machines—probably had more slot machines in the Stardust than they had any place on the Strip.

And of course at that time I opened up the first Keno game on the Strip. They had tried it before on the Strip, and why it didn't take hold I don't know, but when we opened the Stardust, I told them number one, they didn't know anything about Keno or anything, so I asked the powers that be over at the Desert Inn if they were going to have Keno in there, and they said, yes, they were going to have it, but they were very, very skeptical of it because of the ways that it could be cheated. So I told them they didn't have to worry any more because I was the first man to ever have Keno in the state of Nevada, and whatever could be done to the game, had been done to me sideways, as it were. So they were very happy about that, so they put me in complete charge of that along with all the rest of it.

And we opened the Keno game, and I told them that within six months they would be writing, which is, handle, ten thousand dollars a day. Well, I was wrong. Probably one of the first mistakes I ever made in my life, because now I'm not an egotist at all; it happened within two months! So we had a great Keno game; it ran real good, and it was protected as well as any game could ever be protected.

And we'll say the method of operation—the policies— was the same as most any gaming house down there. The customer was treated properly and welcomed into the place, and we did everything that we possibly could for the customer to keep him happy, him or her, such as the case may be. But we did not allow any customer to be insulted in any way, shape, or form by any of our personnel. And if there was a favor that could be done for them, like getting reservations for them at another hotel where they wanted to see a show or something like that, why we were only too glad to do it. And you know most people say, "Well, we have to keep our people here and not let them out of the doors. Well, this doesn't necessarily hold true. And the reason it doesn't hold true is because people by nature do not want to stay in one place all the time, and there are different shows that they want to see and so on. So it got to the point of where there was probably the greatest cooperation in the world between all of the gambling houses in Las Vegas. A person sometimes might win, say, at the Flamingo, which was a case in point, and they would leave their money in safekeeping in the cashier's cage. And then they might roam around—this one particular case, this man wound up in the Stardust, and he's shooting Craps, and he needed some money, and he had extended all of his credit. In other words we always held people to the amount of credit that they asked for. We'd never let them go over that because it's just like an alcoholic when he gets a few drinks in him, then he wants more drinks and more drinks. Sooner or later you have to cut him off because otherwise he's going to get drunk, and a person with credit will do the same thing. They become gaming inebriated, and if you allow them to go on why they'll take all the credit they can get. And then when the time comes to pay off, why there's a little different

situation. They realize what has happened to them, what they've done, so whenever we till out a credit card we ask the person just exactly how much they want at any given time that they are there or any given period that they're there, and we hold them to that. That way they can't say, "Well, you gave me more than I asked for," or this or that or the other thing.

So he had extended his credit, and he says, "I have fifty thousand dollars on deposit at the Flamingo."

So we called down there and they said, "Yes, he had—."

So we said, "Well, we're going to let him play against that fifty thousand and please don't give it to the customer until such a time as we present our bill of what he has lost of it." And strangely enough he lost the whole fifty thousand which was not unusual there; we had those kind of customers. And actually he had won the fifty thousand at the Flamingo; so here they held money that had been won from them for us for the man to play against. Now you can't ask for any better cooperation than that. But the same thing is reciprocal; if we had that money on deposit and somebody was playing down there, we'd give them the same courtesy. So, no big problem.

And this is something that doesn't happen in the Reno area, but I think this is all going to change in time. Reno is sort of breaking out of its cocoon, as it were, now and becoming a more sophisticated way of operating the gambling house. So anyway that was their method of operation, and their policies, and we had good food, good rooms, plenty of parking and everything, good shows, and the people were treated properly. So that was our method of operation and policies.

And my experience as a manager was—strangely enough, it's much easier to run a place like the Stardust as opposed to a smaller place because in a place like the Stardust you

can relegate authority. And then all you have to do is oversee the people who have the authority that you've relegated to, and just see that your orders are carried out. So actually it wasn't as time consuming or as frustrating as trying to run a smaller place where you have to be on top of everything all the time.

And, actually experiences—we didn't have too awful many. The place was just run—well, the day we opened it up, which I have to get a kick out of the way the MGM opened here now—the day we opened it up, the place went along like it had been open for ten years; we didn't have one hitch, not one bobble; everything just went along beautifully. And everything worked, and from the day we opened up until the day I left in 1964 the place did nothing but business, and was a very well-liked place; and all of the people that I worked with were just absolute beautiful people and it just made working there a beautiful thing. As a matter of fact, if I hadn't had this place to come back to here in Reno, I probably never would have left Las Vegas. I would have lived down there for the rest of my life because I spent the most of my—well, you might say mature years down there, went down there when I was thirty-two and was there for eighteen years. I was forty-six when I came back here, It was really nice; I enjoyed living in the town, and I raised my children there, and both of them grew up to be pretty good kids. So, I have nothing but praise for the town of Las Vegas and the people in it.

And oh, we had a lot of people of the old-timers come out there. Nick the Greek used to come out and shoot Craps. We had the usual little things that happen, you know, along the way, maybe a disgruntled customer over something and—. But, oh, I'll tell you one little anecdote. Whenever a customer would get angry with a dealer or something—and actually ninety percent of

the time the customer was wrong, but they wanted to be pacified. So, when they would come to me and say, "Now, I had this kind of a problem with this dealer—" and so on and so forth, I'd say, "Fine, sorry to hear that, but I'll tell you," I said, "this dealer I just happen to know came to work this morning, and one of his children is sick, and he'd been waiting for a phone call, so they had to take him to the hospital. But that's beside the point," I said, "this man insulted you, so I'm going to go right up there and fire him right now and tell him that you said to do it."

"Oh no, no, I don't want you to do that."

"Well, why not? This man insulted you. We can't have that; that's not our policy here."

"But no, no, I'm sorry, I don't want him to get fired."

"Well, what do you want?" I said, "Do you want me to bring the man down here to apologize to you?"

"Oh no, no, I'm sorry. I didn't know that he had this trouble this morning," and so on and so forth. "Everything's all right, just forget about it," and the customer walks away. And that's the way I settled many an argument, because the minute you throw the, as in our vernacular, "the heat on *him*," why he wants no more part of it, you see. So that's the way I used to, shall we say, cool down any person.

And, as I say, Nick the Greek played there, Joe Bernstein (I think I mentioned Joe Bernstein another time), Nanny Kimmel, all characters around Las Vegas for many, many years. Joe Bernstein, for one, he might win two or three hundred thousand dollars one day, and in the next day or so lost it all back and more. And this was the way he gambled. And [we] used to have people who came from all over the United States from New York on west; you name the state or the town and every one of them hit the Stardust. I say hit the Stardust—they came here as customers,

and I got to know quite a few people. And they were all interesting because we worked more on credit with all these people than the cash flow, so you got to know them pretty well. And [it was] very interesting talking to all these customers and knowing— of course again to reiterate—I was kind of an amateur psychologist; I like to watch people and see them in their different actions and so on. I used to get quite a kick out of playing around with people, as it were. Well, just as an example, we had the Lido show, and people would be standing in the non-reservation line just waiting to get in, and I'd walk around, take a look; sometimes I'd see a young couple, you know. You could see that it was the first time in Las Vegas and they're kind of shy and this, that and the other thing, probably just got married or something. [So I'd] go over and say, "Waiting to see the show?"

"Oh, yes."

"It's kind of a long line in front here."

They said, "Yeah, we just hope we can get in."

"Come with me." I just take them right out of the line and bring them over. I go to Andre, our maitre d', and say, "Andre, I want you to give these two people a very nice table and hold the check for me." Of course, I wouldn't tell them that.

Well, they would come out from that show, and some of them with tears in their eyes, just come out looking for me and thanking me. But, it was such a pleasure just to, you know, just to take a young couple like that and there's no way in the world that they probably ever would have gotten in to see the show, and all of a sudden I pick them out and bring them in. But then I get kind of sadistic too sometimes, and when the show would break and people'd start coming out, I'd let a few of them come out, and you'd be surprised how you can manipulate people, what you can

do with them. I would say, "Stop." And all the people would stop.

I'd say, "Now I want to ask you people, did you enjoy the show?"

And everybody, "Oh yes, it was just wonderful."

So I'd say, "Okay, go on." And I'd let about forty of them out, and then I'd say stop, and I'd do this until they all got out of the show [laughing]. The maitre d' used to go crazy when they'd—[laughing]. But people are very strange. They can be led, and they can be manipulated as long as you don't ruffle them up, you know. But if they think that somebody's in authority, and you tell them to stop, they'll stop. If you tell them to go, they'll go. Sometimes I'd sit in the Palm Room, which was our main coffee shop, and we had a round table for all the executives to sit there. And of course the table was situated so that you could see anybody that came into the restaurant or went out. So if we'd see a very important customer or something, why then we'd see that they got a table right away or whatever the case may be; anything, you know to keep them happy, to make them happy. And sometimes I'd see a lady come in, start craning her neck, looking around, and I'd leave the table and walk up and say, "Lady, is there anything I can do to help you?"

"Oh, no, no, I'm just looking for my husband."

I said, "Oh that's nice. Would you recognize him if you saw him?"

"Oh, yes" [laughing].

So I said, "Okay, come on then, go ahead and look for him then" [laughing].

See—which means that people don't really hear what you say because if I told you would you recognize your own husband if you saw him, you'd say, "Wait a minute, what are you talking about?" But people don't even hear what you're saying. She's looking for her

husband, so she wanted to get rid of me right away and keep on looking. But I used to get a kick out of that. I would have a lot of fun with—it was an enjoyable job, really. And along with the seriousness of doing my work, I really enjoyed dealing with people. Of course I liked people. And I enjoyed being around them, and talking to them; I could never be in this business if I didn't.

So, interesting customers—. In the days when the Stardust opened up, most of the so-called characters that were around the downtown places had more or less disappeared. You dealt with a different, shall we say, "class" of people; there was nothing colorful about them in any way, shape, or form, but they came to Las Vegas just to have a good time and enjoy themselves, see a show and do their gambling. There was more or less of a routine situation with people; you didn't have the characters any more as such. Of course we had the gambling-holics, you might say, the gambling alcoholics which are the compulsive gamblers, couldn't help themselves and things like that. But the most of them were routine people, business people, and they came and played and enjoyed themselves.

Now, Morris "Moe" Dalitz—he was president of the Desert Inn, and many stories have been told about him. The only thing I can tell you about Moe Dalitz is my experience with him when I came into the—I'd never known him until I came into the Stardust. The man who brought me into the Stardust was a fellow by the name of Ruby Kolod. I think I mentioned his name before someplace along the line. He was one of the partners in the Desert Inn. And Moe I met when we had a meeting before we opened the Stardust, and it wasn't too long after that that he had his sixtieth birthday party which I was invited to, and I don't know what he

might have been before I met him. There are a lot of stories about him, that he belonged to the Mob back East and all that kind of stuff, but all I know about Moe is that he was a perfect gentleman at all times. I saw the man lose his temper one time, and that was with a Gaming Control Board man. Actually, we were being harassed by the Gaming Control Board at the time because of some unsavory, supposedly unsavory, characters that were seen in the Stardust, and of course it was a public place, and they didn't have the "Black Book" at that time; so the harassment part came one night right in the middle of all the big play—here comes a horde of Gaming Control people, and they wanted all the cards off of all the games and all the dice off of all the games, and it was just general harassment you know. So that time Moe came over from the Desert Inn, and he told the head of the Gaming Control Board, "Well," he says, "I don't know why you're here," but you could see that he was angry; he says, "I don't know why you're here or why you're harassing me, but," he says, "if you want to close this place up, go right ahead and close it up." He said, "Of course you're going to have the biggest lawsuit you ever had on your hands tomorrow morning." But he says, "If you want to close this place up, just go right ahead and close it up right now. But," he says, "I'm getting tired of this harassment." He says, "We haven't done anything here; we're not about to do anything here that's contrary to the laws of the state of Nevada, and that's it. But," he says, "if you want to continue this, either get out or close the place up. Now you have your alternatives." Right there and then, so they all left. And we weren't bothered any more.

But it was just, you know, kind of Gestapo tactics which was entirely uncalled for. And I knew everyone of these guys, every one of these agents—I mean it was comical to me. I

said, "What is it with you people?" But why they did it I don't know, but they did.

But other than that Moe was a very astute businessman and well, like I say, he was just one hell of a nice guy. And any time you'd see him or if he came into the place or anything, he'd be the first one to come over to you and say hello. You didn't have to go seek him out and say, "Hello, I'm here" or something. He'd come over, and if anything happened in the place that called for a decision, a high level decision or something, he would say, "That's your department, you make the decision; right or wrong, you make the decision; I'm behind you all the way." And that's the way it was, and that was the beauty of being able to work under a situation like that. And luckily enough and thankfully I don't think I made any bad decisions ever along the line.

And, as a matter of fact when I left to come up here, Mr. Dalitz called me into private conference. He said, "You know," he said, "you're one of our best men, and we don't want you to go."

And I started out with Moe, and my motives for leaving had nothing to do with the Stardust, as I said before. If it hadn't been that I had this place to come to—and it was a mess as I probably told you earlier. When I got back here it was just terrible, and the lease was up on it, so we decided to come up here and take it over, remodel it and see what we could do with it. And that's the reason that I left the Stardust. Otherwise, as I said before, I would probably still be in Las Vegas, because the way I was treated down there not only in the Stardust, but anyplace that I went, I more or less felt like it was my town. Anyplace I called for a reservation or whatever, I was always treated just beautifully, and of course there was reciprocity there between the executives of all the gaming establishments that if you want to go to a show

at the Flamingo or wherever, it was always complimentary. But even when I was back dealing in the El Rancho, whenever I'd call to go someplace, why people knew me and they would always treat me beautifully; I would always get comped at a show or whatever. And that was very unusual, but those are the things that happened. And it was just an absolutely perfect town as far as I was concerned. I don't know; other people may have had bad experiences there, but I had some of the most beautiful experiences of my life there. The town treated me good. And like I say, when I went down there I wasn't John Petricciani's son. All I did was go down there and look for a job, and I got a job, and they evaluated my abilities and they put me on from there.

And they just didn't go and say, "Well, here's a guy; let's put him in charge of the Stardust." I mean I'm sure that they checked my abilities and experience out pretty good before they decided that that was the kind of a job I should have. As I say I worked my way up from a "21" dealer on up. I had to start at the bottom down there. And that was my only motive for leaving was to come back here and take over the Palace Club. Otherwise I still would have been there, and I don't know whether I would have been at the Stardust at this present time because there's been a lot of changes down there since I left. But even now after fourteen years that I left, whenever I go down to Las Vegas, why anyplace I go they all know Sil Petricciani, and any show I go to or anything else I never spend five cents. And I can bring as many people as I want. I've brought as high as six people to a show or a gourmet restaurant or something, and it's always—they've all remembered me, and some of the fellows that worked for me down there in the Stardust and the El Rancho are now big bosses in some of the other places, and they all remember me and they all treat

me just like I'd never left. So that's the only thing I can say about Las Vegas.

Well, gambling in Vegas from the time that I knew it in 1948 was—the biggest place they had there was the Golden Nugget and then they had the El Dorado Club, the Boulder Club which was the only club that was there during the building of the dam. That's one of the reasons they called it the Boulder Club. Then they had the Pioneer Club, the Las Vegas Club, but they were all clubs on the order of what the Palace Club is now, and they had a little snack bar in them or some had small restaurants. And Golden Nugget had a rather large restaurant.

And gaming in those days in 1948 was, oh, you might call it equivalent to what it has been in Reno throughout the years, the usual games, Craps, "21," Wheel, Big Six or Wheel of Fortune, as you might want to call it. They were very, very skeptical of Keno in Las Vegas due to the fact that the game had been cheated so many times and so many different ways. But some of the downtown places had Keno. And then when I was there, to begin with they had the El Rancho Hotel on the Strip and the Old Frontier Hotel on the Strip. And the Flamingo had just been built in 1947; I went there in '48. And the old Club Bingo which later evolved into the Sahara. That's all they had on the Strip.

And while I was there—of course, you know, when you're in a place and you grow up with it, sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees, nor the opportunities in it—in a town. But they were there, and other people did see them. And the growth of Las Vegas was not what Reno is experiencing today. It evolved rather slowly, and the new growth that happened in Las Vegas, the city was able to coordinate it, and they had wider streets and so on and so forth. And all their little housing developments, there was never a

point where there was a housing shortage such as we know it in Reno today. As a matter of fact at one time in the fifties Las Vegas overbuilt, and they were going around letting you live in an apartment for one month rent-free just to get you to move in.

But Reno, now, has been what you might call a sleepy little town, and all of a sudden it's started to grow. And it just sort of broke at the seams, and the town is not ready for—well, just the facilities of the town, the streets, and everything else and the housing—it's just not ready for the growth that is already there. But, these things have a way of working themselves out in one way or another; and with the outlying districts, people will be commuting to work of course. But I'm sure that it'll be able to take care of itself as time goes on, and the longer it goes why, the more it will be able to take care of itself, because after this one spontaneous growth in the last year, I think Reno's going to level off for some time to come, because in order for the town to handle, or everybody to be able to make money with everything that's happened so far, why it's going to take an awful influx of tourism to be able to support all of these places, and I'm sure that it will, but it's going to be nip and tuck for a long time. I say a long time—the next two or three years.

But I say Vegas grew up in more or less of an orderly development, and as the new hotels were built downtown, they didn't come three or four at a time, they came one at a time; and the Frontier and then the old Sal Sagev Hotel, which was there for many, many years; it never had a casino in it, and finally they put a casino in it. But, some of the people that went in and pioneered Las Vegas, strangely enough, couldn't see the forest for the trees, as it were, and they just sort of thought that everything was going to remain status quo, and it didn't. And as the town grew, little places like the

Pioneer and the Boulder Club had to give way to the bigger places, and they just sort of swallowed them up, which in effect in a lot of ways, is happening here in Reno where the big corporations are coming in and building big blocks of hotels. They have the room, like MGM coming in taking up a hundred and some odd acres. But again Las Vegas was orderly; everything was on Fremont Street or the Strip. Now Reno's going helter-skelter all over town, and I don't believe that this is consistent with orderly growth. The tourist area should be confined shall we say within a couple of city blocks and left there. But here we have the Riverside Hotel, the Ponderosa Hotel and everything going down Virginia Street, and then we have another hotel over here, the Colonial, which is two or three blocks up the street, and we have the Comstock—now that's way out (in our vernacular), way out in left field. And whether all of these places are going to exist when they're not within a traffic area, leaves something to the imagination because they will have their built-in clientele such as the people who stay in their hotels, but whether they're going to be able to exist in their gaming is something else again. Opening up without shows and so on. As I've said before, if this place here, the Palace Club, wasn't in the location that it is, it wouldn't last three months because there would be no reason for people to go out of their way to go to it because it doesn't have enough to offer. But being in the line of traffic and so on and so forth, why then it's reason for its existence and staying in business.

So as I say, Las Vegas grew, but they had their problems, too, on the Strip. And when the Thunderbird opened up, it almost went broke. As people came in and opened up the different hotels, for some reason or other they thought that Las Vegas was the land of milk and honey, as it were, but it wasn't.

People came in that were not knowledgeable about the gaming business, and they built hotels and then found themselves short of bankroll money. Thunderbird opened up; for some reason or other, it didn't take off like it should have, and they came very close to going broke. As a matter of fact, one night they were—if I recall the story, they were so close to going broke that they sent up and borrowed twenty-five thousand dollars from the Golden Nugget. They brought it out there to them, and seems like from that day on, maybe it was lucky money or something (I'm not superstitious), but from that day on, then it took off and started to go.

The Riviera when it first opened up, went through about two bankrolls before it took off and became a success. And the Flamingo, of course, when it first opened up, why that was a fiasco, really a big fiasco. It's hard to say, but you might say that maybe Las Vegas wasn't ready for the Flamingo. And it was a losing proposition for a long time. And it took off and became a success, but all of these things took their time and money. And it just didn't happen overnight.

Like I say, I was in Las Vegas for eighteen years, from 1948 when it was very small until 1964, and I saw the Desert Inn open up; I also saw it lay dormant on the Strip for many years; and the Stardust, I saw it remain dormant. The Royal Nevada opened up next to the Stardust, and of course that was before the Stardust opened. And it didn't last, it went broke, had to close its doors. So, it isn't all gravy the minute you say, "Well, I'm going to open up a big hotel and this is this and that's that."

However, Reno seems to be enjoying something a little different because even with the advent of MGM and all these other places, they seem to just be bringing in more people, and nobody so far is hurting businesswise that I know of, including myself. But, it remains to

be seen when they alt open up what's going to transpire.

So now let's go to a little dissertation on—I've compared it with Reno, told you about the development of gambling in Las Vegas. Of course, Las Vegas had more monied people coming to Vegas than Reno has, or had; Reno's been more of a, what we call again in our vernacular, a grind town where you get an influx of a lot of people, with smaller amounts of money. Las Vegas catered more or less to the highroller, and they had a lot of them. So that's one of the reasons for Vegas being as it is and the big hotels and so on and so forth, a more plush type of gaming. Of course, whether Reno is going to accept that or not, I don't know. There are certain types of people that will not go to those big hotels, and of course, Vegas has those types too, but Vegas draws more from, shall we call it, a more flamboyant area such as Los Angeles and the East, like (without going into ethnics or anything), the Jewish population of the United States are very big gamblers, and they love to gamble. And Las Vegas has more or less the corner of the market on them. And they're good gamblers; they're not heavy drinkers, but they do like to gamble, and they have the money to gamble, and it's been a very successful operation for Las Vegas with the influx of the Jewish population there, and of course the Los Angeles area is predominantly Jewish. So consequently it's one thing—just sort of goes hand in hand, Of course, they've got people from the Miami area and the New York area and St. Louis— well, all over the whole eastern seaboard.

Now, Reno in comparison draws from the San Joaquin Valley, and Sacramento area, San Francisco, which is a much more conservative area, and incidentally a much greater incidence of drinking people and alcoholism for some reason or other. As a

matter of fact if I remember a year or so ago, San Francisco was supposed to be the—had the greatest incidence of alcoholism of any city in the United States. I don't know whether you read that or not, but—. And as a matter of fact it became quite a problem. But things are changing to a point in Reno; you're getting more of a cross-section of people from all over the United States, you know. We're getting a lot of Canadians now; we're getting a lot of people from the Northwest such as Seattle and Portland, Spokane. You're getting a different, shall we say, *class* of person and a different type of gambling person. They're more shall we say, middle class people, little more money, and we have an influx on weekends of quite a bit of the Filipino population from the farming areas and around the San Joaquin Valley. We also have quite an influx of the colored population from the Oakland area. But, they all have money, and they're all players. And they all love to play, and it brings money into the town, into the state.

So now we'll go on to the Kefauver report. Of course, this is my own opinion. Here is an idiot, Mr. Kefauver, who probably had the worst conditions in the whole United States right in his own backyard in Tennessee. And all of a sudden, he's going to become the great do-gooder, and he's going to clean up the whole United States. We had a Kefauver report. He had a big investigation, and actually whatever came of it, I don't know because he had all of these sessions, and he had people testifying, and this and that and the other thing. He was going to clean up the United States and get the mobs out of gaming and so on and so forth. And really if you come down to think about it, as far as Nevada was concerned, we had less gambling with wide-open gambling going on in the state of Nevada, than any part of the United States, because you see when you get into

your racetracks, you get into your numbers racket, and all of the hidden gambling houses that were sprinkled throughout the East and everything, Nevada was like a little pimple on a sore. And this man all he did was stir up a bunch of manure, as it were, made a stink all over, and accomplished actually nothing. Accomplished absolutely nothing.

I got a kick out of—all right, so we had our Bugsy Siegels, and some other supposedly (I don't know, I never met these people or had anything to do with them) —but supposedly other people who belonged to, what is commonly referred to as, the Mob. And they came into the Las Vegas area, and they, like Siegel built the Flamingo Hotel, but this was not his forte. He didn't belong in that element, so consequently what happened to the Flamingo recently proved it. The man made a mistake—he didn't belong there. And when it was taken over by proper operators, why it became a success.

So when you—you know you read and see the pictures of the *Godfather* and all of these, *The Green Felt Jungle* and everything, but if all of these things happened, the question comes to my mind, how many of these people did they put in jail? How many people did they convict of any crime? Now if you'll search back through, you'll find that there were none, absolutely none that were active in Las Vegas that ever were put in jail or convicted of any crime. So I mean, what is the answer? Oh, it was great publicity, you know, and great reading, but as far as doing any great good, I doubt it.

I get a kick out of one little fellow. I forget what his name was, but he was at one of the hearings, and I think one of the people, or it might have been Mr. Kefauver himself that asked him how much education he had.

And he said, "Well, Senator, I'm sorry," he says, "but," he says, "I didn't even graduate

from high school.” He says, “If I had graduated high school and gone on to college,” he says, “I may have become a senator like you.” In the meantime, this little fellow who had made his money in gaming and so on and so forth, a perfect little gentleman, probably could buy and sell Kefauver five times.

So you see I get a little rabid on these senators and so on and so forth because it reminds me of the time that Ted Kennedy and Tunney come over here to see how the Indians were faring over here at Pyramid Lake. They had a little junket over here, and they looked the whole thing over; then they went back. Have you ever heard anything on that? You never will. They came and saw and left. So when you get to the politicians that they’re going to clean up and be a knight in shining armor and feel that they have to lead people by the hand. Of course, we’re kind of a rugged people here in Nevada, and we don’t need these people to show us how to live our lives. I mean if they want to show the rest of the country and the rest of the country’s gullible enough to go for it, why fine and dandy. But I consider myself just as intelligent a human being as any senator we have in the United States, and probably more because I have common sense. But these people the way they act and the way they talk, it reminds me of “Li’l Abner” where they have Senator Jackass Phogbound, and it’s really comical all of the things that they do and accomplish nothing, absolutely nothing.

So we go along, and it did open up investigations by— oh, they established crime commissions in the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service and so on and so forth, but you see these things didn’t interest me too much, nor did I worry about them too much, nor did they have any impact on me because, as I said before, I was born and raised in the state of

Nevada where we’ve always had gaming, and we consider it a respectable way of life. Honest gambling is work just like a grocery store or a dry goods store or any chain store of any kind. You work on a percentage, and that’s it period. People come here to have a good time, and they allow themselves so much money for their pleasure, and they go on about their business.

I will agree on one thing—I think New Jersey’s made a big mistake by allowing gambling because it should never be implemented in a place where they have a big population of working people, and factories and manufacturing, big manufacturing and so on because there again it has an impact on the people because people will gamble. And of course, I have mixed emotions about it because they have the numbers racket and everything else, where people lose their money on that. But, if, you know, a fellow gets his paycheck and goes out and loses it, and doesn’t have anything to feed his wife and kids with the next week, why it goes bad for the gaming and probably will bring in more federal regulation, as opposed to a resort area such as Reno and Las Vegas where people come maybe once a year or something like that, do their thing and go on about their business, go home and work and feed their families and so on. So that is the difference and like I say, I have mixed emotions about what’s going to happen in a place like New Jersey.

But I think I’ve given you my feelings on all of these congressional investigations. And I mean, to me they’re comical because number one, if they come to the right people (I’ve never been investigated in my life, and when I say investigated, I’ve never been asked or questioned about anything like this), you know, when these people come, I don’t know who they interview or what, but they certainly

don't interview the right people because they might get a little different insight on what's going on.

Did the investigations result in any changes in the industry at all?

I'm still running this place like I did back in 1932. We wound up with a Gaming Control Board, but we had that before the Kefauver investigation. And the only reason for the Gaming Control Board and the Gaming Commission and so on and so forth was to be able to tax the industry. Prior to the forties we just had a county license and a city license and the state wasn't in on it at all. We didn't have any problems. Now we have our bureaucrats, and the Gaming Commission and the Gaming Control Board, and they come around once every three years and audit you and this and that and the other thing, and it still hasn't made any change in the way I operate my place.

They've got a book maybe six inches thick of all the rules and regulations, and if you run an honest place, and you run your gaming according to the way it should be, all those rules and regulations don't mean a thing because you're not breaking any. So I don't know who they made all these rules and regulations for, but it's just a question of more and more government and more and more paperwork and accomplishing nothing. But I guess it creates jobs for people, so if it keeps people working, fine and dandy.

But insofar as—now they say just like Howard Hughes cleaned up the state of Nevada. Well, the state of Nevada wasn't dirty! What'd they clean up? All he did was the places that he bought are becoming dirtier, I mean physically dirtier. He hasn't done anything to make the places look nicer or anything. He is remodeling the Desert Inn,

but you know, the great god Howard Hughes came in and he put a new image on the state of Nevada. What image did he put on the state of Nevada that we didn't have before? And he came in and bought up a bunch of casinos and so on and so forth, and what'd he do with them? All he did was get them in trouble. And the people that sold out were running a completely, perfectly legitimate operation. So, I don't know. All he did was buy something from somebody else that was supposed to be dirty, made it successful, and created a lot of money and taxes for the state of Nevada. So I really have mixed emotions about what they're trying to accomplish. If you have something that's good, why, for some reason or other nobody wants to leave it alone. Everybody wants to get their finger in the pie or start stirring it up or something to see if they can find something bad about it. And it's just kind of—really it's funny. I just don't understand it.

Do you think that gaming in New Jersey will affect the Nevada gaming industry in any way?

No, only if something happens back there that causes the federal government to step in and make regulations and of course, then it would be nationwide, and then it would have an effect on us, but as long as—again, they keep their nose clean and don't have any problems, why then—you mean insofar as the flow of money into the state of Nevada is—? No, because the people that they will be catering to back there, probably would never come out here anyway. And they've got a long ways to go before they ever get to the point of where Nevada is. They're trying to get one hotel open this year, and that's doubtful whether they will or not.

And, they don't know where they're going really insofar as their rules and regulations

and their commissions and so on, because well, it's just like if I put you up in my pit up here and said, "Watch these games." You know, you wouldn't know where you were going or what you were doing, and it wouldn't—. So, no I don't, I don't see any impact that the East would have on the West insofar as cash flow in the state of Nevada. If California opened up, that would have an effect on Nevada.

An adverse affect?

Oh yes, definitely, because people wouldn't have to come here, and you know, oh I'd say, right now about between sixty-five and seventy-five percent of our business comes from California, and that's only because we've opened up new markets for business. Before that it was higher yet, so if for instance California opened up gaming, why they would probably draw the people from Oregon and Washington because they wouldn't have to come over the mountains through the snow and so on and so forth, and the distance required— oh, I think it would have quite an impact on Las Vegas and Reno if California opened up gaming, if they opened it up such as we know it here in Nevada. Of course, that again remains to be seen, how they would open it up. See, like New Jersey's going to have just certain hours that they're going to be able to stay open and so on and so forth. It's not going to be a twenty-four hour situation. It's not going to be anything like we have it here today. So, no, I doubt very much it would have any effect whatsoever on Nevada.

Now, I didn't know Bugsy Siegel. Major Riddle and Sidney Wyman I knew—they always seemed to be perfect gentlemen for many years and they always ran a good business. And oh, I suppose according to the papers and I wasn't aware of it when I was down there and knew these people—that

they were booking sports and horses and everything on the sly. And I think Sidney Wyman has an indictment or something pending; of course he's a sick man now, and whether it'll ever come to trial or not, I don't know. But these people always ran an honest and good business. Never had any personal dealings with them, just maybe, you might say, third-person deal. And Siegel I didn't know at all; that was before my time down there. He got killed in 1947 or '48. I didn't know him or anything about him. But in fact Riddle and Wyman and all the other people that I knew throughout my tenure in Vegas like Carl Cohen, Moe Dalitz, Sam Tucker, Milton Jaffe, Beldon Katleman, his uncle Jake Katleman—trying to think back who some of the other people were. It was a strange thing; these people ran their businesses, and they always were very friendly people, and it wasn't a question of going up and asking them for a favor or anything. You'd go up and say, "Hi, how are you?"

And [they'd] say, "Hi. Can I do something for you? Some way I can help you?" This is what made Vegas successful.

It wasn't, "What do you want?" It's, "What can I do to help you?" In other words, they figured that the town was a good town; it had a lot of things going for it, and that everybody was entitled to make a dollar, and everybody was entitled to a living.

And this was just the general feeling about people all over. I mean whether a man opened up in a grocery store or whatever he did, whatever his way of life was, a furniture store or gaming or whatever, they all cooperated with each other, and it wasn't a question of dog eat dog, or trying to break the other guy or anything like that. There was no room for that down there because the town was flourishing; it was getting successful, and everybody was just real happy, such as myself. I really enjoyed

Las Vegas. Now people say that it was a cold town, this, that and the other—I didn't find it that way at all. And, all of these, oh, Kosloffs, they were—one of them, Jake now is down on the island of Aruba, and he was in the Golden Nugget. All of these people that grew up with Las Vegas, and—the Moss brothers, Benny Moss and Eddie Moss, they had the old El Dorado Club there for a long time. As a matter of fact they had it while I had the Faro Bank in there. And, you know just like when we closed up the Faro Bank, went broke, first thing they did, they came over and said, "We don't have much to offer you, but we know that you need work. If you'd like to go to work dealing here for us, you're welcome." So, just beautiful people like that.

And, oh, I don't know what would have happened if they didn't like you. I wouldn't say that people would kill you or anything like that, but they'd let you know that they didn't like you, and they'd have nothing to do with you, period. Of course this is the normal chain of events, but as long as you were a nice person to them, why they took care of you. They'd do anything in the world to help you. So, I really enjoyed it down there.

Of all the things that you hear about, you know, mobsters and this, that, and the other thing, I didn't find it that way at all. There was no time that I was ever confronted with anything like that. And, as history will prove, Vegas was a very clean town. There was a very low crime rate for the type of town that it was, and it was kept that way. People more or less policed themselves, and had no problems whatsoever. I have nothing, really nothing but praise for Las Vegas and the people in it from the time that I was there until I left.

And, to conclude, when I went to Vegas I had my ups and downs, as I said before in one of our other sessions, and I raised my two children down there. My son and

daughter went to school there; I never had any problems with them such as we see with children today. My son was one of two people out of the town of Las Vegas, graduated from Las Vegas High School, and was accepted at Rensselaer Polytech[nic] University in Troy, New York, which I believe is second to MIT [in the] nation. And my daughter went to UCLA. And they both grew up to be good kids, never given me a nickel's worth of trouble, such as with anything like the kids do today with their marijuana and their different dopes and this and that and the other thing.

And Las Vegas was a good family town. My wife and I enjoyed ourselves there. We had our little home there, and we met many beautiful people. We had very good religious life. Las Vegas, surprisingly enough, has many, many churches; and of course it all depends on what your faith is. We happen to be Catholic, but when we'd go to weddings or funerals or such and so on, if you went to a Jewish one— why I still have a silk yarmulke, which is the little black cap that you put on your head when you walk into a synagogue. And when they came to my church for any function, why they respected our religion. Everybody respected each person's religion, such as Catholics didn't eat meat on Friday; that was fine, and they respected that. If they came to your house, they'd eat fish with you. And if you went to their house, well, then you ate their food. And, there was just nothing in Vegas that would tend to ethnic, or derogatory to any particular religion or nationality or creed, you know, just—.

There was a long time there, before the, shall we call it the emancipation, that the colored people would live on their side of town; they called it the West Side, and they lived there and went to work, and they of course—I suppose through lack of education or whatever—they did all the menial jobs such

as porters and maids and so on. But then again on the other hand, you have to have somebody to do something in all the different trades that it took to keep one of those hotels going, or one of the casinos downtown. So it was no big problem with anybody; they didn't have any race riots or anything. Even the entertainers used to stay in one of the hotels over on the West Side, and of course, it gradually evolved to a different situation, but even so, I could drive over to the West Side and go through their town or walk through their town. I knew most of these people; they all respected me; I never had any problems with them of any kind. And all I can say is during my complete life in Las Vegas, other than the tragedies that occurred there in my family (death of two wives and so on), why I was a very happy person there. Outside of that, that's about all I can say for Vegas. It was just a beautiful time of my life.

RENO, 1964

And now we come to Reno, 1964. When I came to Reno in 1964, there hadn't been too much change from the time I left in 1948. Of course I'd been coming back and forth to Reno for many years, and they still had the same places. Oh, the Primadonna had opened up on the other side of the street, and Horseshoe Club, and that's about it on that side of the street I guess. And Harrah's had opened up down the other side of the street below Harolds Club and the Nevada Club. But they were all gambling houses, as it were, and hadn't changed an awful lot from the time when I first came up here. And the old Golden Hotel had burned down. The Tomerlin brothers had started to rebuild the Golden Hotel. Of course, they didn't build the hotel; they just built the bottom part and part of the parking above, and it, too, was a gambling house until Harrah bought it and then finished up the hotel.

And, as a matter of fact the Overland couldn't have gaming there because of a deal that Mr. Hobson had made when he sold the Old Frontier Club to Harrah's, where he

couldn't have gaming for seven years after the sale. And then of course the Overland opened up gaming in July of '64, when we first came back. And Reno was still the same little— not little old town—but it was the same town that I had left years ago. They had the Mapes Hotel and the Riverside, and that was all of the hotels. And I just sort of came back into a same situation that I left. Of course, I'd been gone from 1948 to '64 which was sixteen years. And, I had mixed emotions about coming back, really.

I say there weren't too many changes and developments, but talking about the condition of the Palace Club, it was quite a deal. It was the same old club that I had left in 1943, only dirtier. It still had the fluorescent lights in the ceiling, still had some old wood paneling that my dad had put in there the early forties, late thirties, and it was in a complete run-down condition. The toilets actually stunk. The place was just dirty, filthy, and it seemed like they just lived from, oh you might say, pension check to pension check, that's about all the type customer they had in here.

Of course, for some reason or other, possibly because it was the home of Keno, it did have real good Keno play, and always has had, even to this day. They used to cater on the weekends to all of the Filipinos and so forth. They had a little, very small restaurant which seated about ten people. And, I forget how many games they had. The slot machines were all run down, and I don't know what the percentages were on them, but I couldn't imagine it was very good.

So when we came back, the games were old-type tables and dirty with the layouts where the dealer would shuffle; that's the part of the cloth that wears out first. So what they did they'd cut out a square or rather a rectangle and instead of changing the whole layout, when that would wear through at that point, why then they would take that block of wood out, that rectangle of wood out, and recover that block of wood and put it back in there to save money. And [laughs] it was just a dirty, filthy place, and they wouldn't allow colored people in here at all because they would interfere with the Indians that used to come in here. And the colored and the Indians, at that time, didn't like each other at all, and I guess they figured the Indians were better customers than the colored. So they told the colored they couldn't come in. And this is what we came back to.

The customers were Filipinos that came up on weekends, and then the Indians and, shall I say, bums that used to come in here. And it'd just be comical; they had an old rubber linoleum-type floor, and of course during the graveyard shift, the wee hours of the morning, they'd have the swamper come in with his bucket of water and swamp the place all out. So, this was by observation, I'd come in in the wee hours of the morning, and the bar would be lined up, but there'd be nobody buying a drink. I guess they all had little drink tickets

or something from the Keno, and they'd all be sitting at the bar. So the swamper would come through, and everybody would get up off the bar, pull their stools back, and let the swamper come through and swamp it all, and then they'd all put their stools back to the bar and go back to their drinking. And this was a routine thing every morning. I just looked at this; I couldn't believe it.

So they had one customer, an ex-floorman from Harolds Club, and this is fact, but I saw this. Of course it lasted the one time that I saw it. But this gentleman retired and he used to come in and shoot Craps. He would stand at the Crap table, and he didn't have very good control of his bladder. So, he actually would wet his pants; it would go onto the floor. So when that happened, they would have a porter come up and sprinkle sawdust around him. And this is fact. I saw this happen one time, and I ran the man out. mean that was the end of that. But this is the type of person that they were dealing to when I came back.

And this was—you ask about policy—that was their policy. I mean anybody that had ten cents that come in here, why he was welcome. But, and that was, again their method of operation. Well, of course I have to believe that for the last year that these people were in here, knowing that we were coming back and they couldn't get another lease, why they just let things really go to pot, which they did. And that's what we came back to.

So, we came looking through the place, and we decided that something had to be done with the place. Of course, everybody in town said, "Now don't put a carpet on the floor, because you'll go broke. Reno needs a place like this."

So, coming back from, shall we say, the plushness of Las Vegas and the places that I worked in, and coming back to something like this, and then I had to have somebody

here in Reno tell me not to put a carpet on the floor, but to cater to the people that were here because Reno needed a place like this, why needless to say, I told them off in no uncertain terms.

So we had a meeting, the family, and we decided that the place should be completely remodeled. So we set about doing that. We cleaned the place out completely. As a matter of fact, we just gutted it out. And at the present time we still have mixed emotions as to whether we should have torn the whole building down and just started from scratch. Of course it would have been a lot cheaper then to do it that way. But, we elected to stay in business and do the remodeling, so we remodeled the place completely—put a nice restaurant in, and gutted out the whole basement and just did everything that we possibly could, or knew of, to make it into a first class establishment. And the innovations were we enlarged our Keno game, and we put it in direct competition with everybody else that was in business in town. And, strangely enough, talk about philosophy—you can philosophize all you want, but when it comes down to hard cash and knowing what you're doing, well, evidently we did because as soon as we put the carpet down on the floor and cleaned the place up, we didn't have to throw the people out that were here; they just left of their own accord. We had no problem in getting rid of that particular class of customer that they had in here. And of course, we put all new slot machines in, loose slot machines; but we had no problem at all with the people because they just didn't come back any more. And we started to get a completely different class of clientele in the place, and it has remained so.

And our methods of operation—as I said before, our policy was that we would not exclude the Black people. (As a matter of fact,

I'll tell you a story about that in a minute.) Our methods of operation were the same as anybody else in town or the way we operated in Vegas. We ran a clean store. We did put an innovation in which some people do not do yet, but I think eventually everybody will, and that was we put a little box on the side of the "21" game so that when the dealer dealt the cards out and picked up all the discards, they would put the discards in this box on the side and deal right down to the deck. Most places here when they deal with a single deck game, the dealer picks up all the cards and puts them underneath the deck. Well, the reason that we don't like that is because, number one, a dealer can mix up cards and get them the way they want them, put them back under the deck and turn the deck over, and then start dealing these cards out again with an accomplice on the outside. So, this putting them down here eliminates that completely, makes a more honest game out of it. And that was one of the innovations that we made. A lot of people followed suit. Some still haven't, like Harrah's; they don't do that, they put the cards underneath again. That's their business; I mean their method of operation is none of my business.

But, and our policy was that there would never be anything nefarious done in this place, period, and up to and including it a person were playing, and you know, many times a person'll be playing "21" or something, and the dealer may turn over "21," and they'll throw their cards down, not even looking at them considering the dealer has a blackjack, and they'll just walk away, and you turn their cards over and find out they, too, may have a blackjack or something; we would make it a point to go and bring that person back and give them their money back. But, that again, just made it— we had many, many repeat customers just for that. [They] said, "Well gee,

this is the first time this ever happened to us.” Usually if it’s something like that, they would never call you back. They’d just put the money in the tray and forget about you. That is one of our methods of operation, our policy.

And oh, let’s see, I was going to tell you a story about something here—.

About Blacks.

Oh, yes. Well, when I first came back, of course, I got a call from some young fellow from the press and wanted to know what I was going to do about the colored situation here. So I said, “Well, you know,” I said, “I wasn’t aware that there was a situation.” I said, “But maybe you can enlighten me.” I said, “Why don’t you come over?”

So, he said, “All right.”

I said, “I don’t talk to anybody over the telephone.”

“Okay.”

So he came over; we talked a little bit. He said, “Well,” he said, “the Palace Club has been known for not having any Blacks in here at all and not allowing them in here and what are you going to do about it?”

I said, “I’m not going to do a darn thing about it. If they want to come in here, they’re perfectly entitled to come in.” I said, “I’m not going to keep anybody out of here, as long as they behave themselves, and spend their money, and play like gentlemen or ladies. No way,” I said, “I’m going to bar anybody.” Of course we’d already had the situation in Las Vegas, and I knew that there was no way in the world that you could exist in business and be a bigot, as it were.

So, I said, “By the way, why don’t you come home to dinner with me?” Of course at that time, I was a single man; my wife had just died; I’d just buried her—not too long before that—[it] was September. I came back

here in— well, we took over June tenth of the next year, but our actual corporation started on the first of April. So, I was staying at my mother’s down on South Virginia Street at the time. I said, “Why don’t you come home to dinner with me.”

So I took him home to dinner. He sat down there, and he lived in Carson City. And during the course of the evening he had—I never saw anybody drink like this in my life, and just a young fellow. Well, he sort of staggered out the door when he left to go home to Carson City, and I haven’t heard nor seen from this fellow since. But, he was told in no uncertain terms that we were not up here to keep people out of the place; we wanted everybody in the place and so on. So, that’s kind of comical, really, what happened. But I guess he thought he had a big story there, you know, we were going to keep people out or something. He was very much surprised. I haven’t heard from this man since. No article in the paper, no nothing. Absolutely nothing. I said, “I want to show you we’re an old-time family here,” and so on and so forth. Well, he ate and drank like a little pig! That was the end of that.

Were the other clubs in town integrated before the Palace Club?

Yes, they sure were. Of course, Bill Fong had the New China Club down here, and most of the colored people stayed more or less down on Lake Street and in Fong’s, and then they had a couple of clubs, small clubs along Commercial Row here down towards Lake Street that—they sort of hung out there by themselves, you know.

But, now we talk about competition among the clubs. Really wasn’t anything competitive. We all deal the same game. We all deal the same price. The gaming business

is a very unique business in that you don't change your percentages. Everybody has the same percentage; everybody has the same Keno game; everybody has—well, possibly some places might have a slot machine that might be one or two percent looser or tighter than another place, but the overall picture is all about the same. So, it's a question of how you treat your customer, as to whether he's going to come back or not. It's not a question of being competitive with somebody else because they have nothing else to offer other than—like Harrah's has a show to offer or something like that, which he uses to entice people. We have coupons that we distribute in motels and so on and so forth—free nickels or whatever the case may be, so it's just a question of getting the customer into the place, and once you got him in there, then it's a question of how you treat him, and if he's treated properly, well, he or she will come back. So then you develop your own clientele, you know—begin to know everybody that comes in, to a point. And competition, as we know it, is—well, you can walk around for yourself now and see there's nothing that anybody does in their gaming part that is any different from anybody else. Oh, they may have a buffet or something else that will go bring in people, but outside of that—. Just like the Nugget down in Sparks, they're noted for their food, and they bring a lot of people in on account of their food. That was before they ever had a show, a showroom. So, it's just a question of having a gimmick to get the person into your place. Like we're noted for our food here. We have, I would say, as good a food as you can get in the town of Reno, and people come back to eat our food; the price is right, so consequently—. Once they get in your door, you figure that ten percent of the people that come in your door are going to play.

Seems like an awfully small percentage.

It is—it is very small, but observe it sometime. You'll see people—you watch the people that come out of the restaurant and so on and so forth, you watch and see how many people actually go to the games or slot machines or Keno and play—very few. But they fill up your place, and people go where people are. There's psychological thinking, as it were.

And, as far as protecting the games, again, you know you give the devil his dues—with the teeth that we have in the laws now through the Gaming Commission and the Gaming Control Board, why the days of the crossroader and the cheater are gone. Very, very little of that going on any more, but we did just the other day catch an Oriental person marking the cards on the shoe, but it was so obvious that we just said, "Hey, you have two choices: either get out, or be arrested."

And we have the right now to hold a person if you suspicion that they're cheating, not that you actually catch them cheating, but if there's a suspicion of it. Well, then you have the right to hold them here and call a police officer, have them booked. So the day of the crossroader, as it were, is over with, ninety-five percent of them. There's still people that are going to try, but most of the problems in gaming and protecting the games comes from mistakes the dealers make. Of course that's what we have our floormen for; they're supposed to be there. And not only the mistakes that the dealers make, but the mistakes that a customer might make or something. We're protecting ourselves as well as the customer because you're dealing in the human element, and humans make mistakes—gods don't make mistakes, but humans do. So consequently you're dealing with the human element, and if a dealer

makes a mistake and takes a customer's money, that leaves a bad taste in his mouth. Now if the customer says something, we bring the cards back, and if it's a legitimate mistake, and customer's right, he gets his money back immediately or vice versa. If the dealer makes a mistake and pays a customer and our floormen catch it, why that's it. But ninety-five percent of our problems run with the human element and the mistakes that they make. And of course you have some people that are nefarious people that deal off bank rolls, as it were, and you just have to protect yourself against that. But, even these people get found out sooner or later, and then they can't work in the industry any more, so there's no big problem in the protection of the game.

Okay, now our methods of dealing with the crossroaders, such as I told you the other day—I was just a little bit miffed about what happened. I was down getting a haircut when this player was marking the cards, and the floorman told him to either quit, get out of here or he'd be put in jail. Well, I told my—he was my shift boss—I said, "What you should have done is held him and had him put in jail immediately; that way anybody else that wants to try it knows what's going to happen to them, as opposed to letting them go and go into some other place and let them do it someplace else because those kind of people we don't need in the whole town." So he allowed as how I might be right about that, and from here on out that's what he's going to do.

Because you don't leave yourself liable if you just keep the people here and call the police and say, "I suspect this person of cheating." Of course, this one they had their rights because they saw him marking the cards, and they also took the cards out of the shoe and you could see where he had marked all of the face cards and aces. So he knew that

if he had a thirteen or fourteen and he knew the next card was going to be a face card, why he was not going to hit, period. And he could also, what we in our vernacular again, call "kill" the hole card. In other words, he could tell whether the dealer's hole card was a large card or a small card because of the mark he had on the cards, as you can look down along the edge, you see, and see what he had marked. And he could tell if a dealer had a face card showing and it was one of the marked cards underneath, then he knew it was a twenty. So consequently he's going to hit eighteen if necessary. He wouldn't, but he'd hit sixteen. So the dealing with the hustler is now, we do have a law, and I say give the devil his dues. The Gaming Commission, the Gaming Control Board and the legislature in their infinite wisdom have passed laws which do protect us to some extent, and also in Keno I have my own method of protecting it which is through a microfilming device and we don't have any problem with that.

So, like I say, we've been in business since 1964 here. Of course, I was in business for my dad before from 1932 on, through '43 when I went in the service, and then came back again in 1964, and we've been in business ever since, and it's been a successful business. And we've enjoyed being in the gaming industry. And of course I guess I could adapt myself to some other type of business, but the gaming business is a very intriguing business, and it's a very challenging business. And being the type of person that I am, I really love to be in it, and I probably will be in it until I die. I can't contemplate a retirement for myself.

Comical. I never quite featured myself at the age of sixty being an old man, but it was brought home to me in a nice way the other day when we were down in Los Angeles. We went to the King Tut exhibit and also went on a tour of the Queen Mary, and when we went

up to the window to get the tickets to go on the tour of Queen Mary, the girl said, "Is there anybody here over fifty-five?"

I said, "Oh yes, I happen to be sixty."

And she says, "Oh good," she says, "you'll get in for two dollars less because you're a senior citizen" [laughing].

I'm just a little bit perturbed about that whole thing [laughing] because I didn't want to be worth two dollars less! [Laughing] I didn't want to be classed as a senior citizen because I don't consider myself that. However, I guess some people, at the age of fifty-five, are old people; but I don't think old and I don't feel old. So it's one of those things.

You started to say something about cheating back in the thirties.

I had never seen it, but cheating back in the thirties, if they caught a crossroader then, they'd take him downstairs and put his fingers in a vice and break his fingers. So that marked him, and also wouldn't make him so adept. But, those are the chances you took, and they knew what the consequences would be when they went in to cheat these places. But it's no different than the barbaric systems that the Orientals had when they wanted to question somebody and they'd put bamboo shoots under their fingernails. I mean there were methods of torture, but this wasn't so much a method of torture as a method of punishment because, you know, back in the thirties the dollar was worth a dollar and a half as compared to today; and there wasn't that much play, and you couldn't afford to have somebody cheat you out of—in those days if they cheated you out of fifty dollars or a hundred dollars, why that was a big score. And you couldn't afford to lose that kind of money because you didn't have that many players to make it up. So consequently the

cheater knew what the consequences were if he got caught; he'd either get beat up or his fingers broken. And the house knew that they couldn't afford it, so it was just a method of punishment and nobody bothered anybody about it. And the cheater didn't go to the police and say how he was mangled and so on and so forth because he knew that he'd get thrown in jail. But, that was just a way of life. It's not life as we know it today, but it was a way of life in those days. It was an accepted way of life; nobody thought anything about it. Of course you didn't have the lawsuits and the lawyers and this and that and the other thing that you have today. But

Oh, one other little anecdote. Something that brought home to me very vividly one time—and you see a lot of times where if a person takes a picture in a gambling establishment, why security'll go and take the film away from them and so on and so forth. Well, that happened here in the club. And the fellow we took the film away from—we had the film developed, cut out the picture that he took in the place and sent the film back to him.

So, all of a sudden we find a lawsuit on our hands, and it was comical—a lawsuit for stopping a guy; there's a city ordinance against that. So I had my attorney look through city ordinances; there is no such law. The man was suing us for invasion of his privacy because we developed his film, which we had no right to do.

So, the outcome of the suit was, it cost us two thousand dollars. He settled for two thousand dollars. But, being a public establishment, you cannot stop a person from taking a picture in your establishment. There's no city ordinance or anything else. However, if a customer in the establishment objects to it, then he can in turn sue the person that took the picture for invasion of privacy. However,

the place, the business establishment itself is out of it completely. So now people come in here and take pictures, let them have a ball. Cost me two thousand dollars to find that out.

Now the place can have its own regulation and post it that the taking of pictures is forbidden, but whether they can make that stick, as a regulation of conducting a business, I doubt very much because it is a public organization, and there is no law against your taking a picture. But that is something that cost me—well, you see a lot of times when a lesson is expensive, it stays with you for a long, long time.

And I suppose we were lucky to get off with the two thousand dollars because he was suing for much more.

This just happened about four or five years ago, in the early seventies. But it's fact and that's the way it is, so—. Wow if you want to come in and take a picture of the Palace Club, you can come in anytime, and if somebody objects to it, why then they can sue you. But they have no recourse to law against the establishment.

I've changed my mind. Okay, on our last discussion we were talking about cheating, and I said that the Gaming Control Board and Gaming Commission has gotten some teeth in their laws that we can, if we suspect, even suspect anybody of cheating, why they can be held against their will until such a time as we can call a police officer and explain the situation to him and say that they are suspected of cheating without incurring lawsuits. And as a matter of fact we have a sign right up there that so states, and I did make the statement that I said cheating per se from the outside or the customer, is dead. I have to retract that statement right now because in the last couple of months we have found since we put shoes in, such as four deck shoe, that people have been marking the cards and being

able to tell what the next card is coming out when they hit. And we've discovered several of these decks being marked as such, and we have caught people cheating—some of my floormen have, and of course they ran them out of the place, but I told them the next time they catch anybody doing such a thing, why to hold them and we'll have them arrested; and it's my understanding that the MGM has caught quite a few of them also.

Well, since that time I have changed from Bee cards to the Chem plastic cards, and which are very hard to bend. As a matter of fact, they can't be bent without it being visible to a small child. And we put these cards in the shoes, and it's most surprising the turnaround of our hold as opposed to the Bee cards. So we feel that in putting these cards in, that we have circumvented all of these cheaters that have been coming in trying to bend the cards. And some probably we haven't caught because you can't be up twenty-four hours a day, and you can't be watching every game at all times. So, and it has made a difference; so consequently we're going to continue to use the plastic cards as opposed to the Bee cards, which are cardboard or paper and they can be crimped.

They can bend or crimp the high cards so that you know, say for instance, they'll come from the aces, tens, on down through the eights, and they know that there's some going to be in that area; and if they have a fourteen for instance, they would never hit the card; or if they saw that it was a card that was not bent and they had a fourteen, well then they know they're going to get a seven or under, so consequently they go ahead and hit. And as a matter of fact, it's kind of made a complete turnaround in our customers, strangely enough.

There's one other way you could do it [protect the game], but people like to pick

their cards up and be participants in the game. And the other way you could do it is just to deal cards face up all around and not let the customer touch the card. Then you would be protected in that respect. However, people, you know, you take away the fascination of the game, they can't pick up their cards and look at them, and a lot of people feel that they're going to get cheated from the establishment, so they don't want the dealer to be able to see what their cards are. And psychologically this is fact. So we think we've just about got it where we want it now; at least we can protect it a lot better.

But the main thing is that when I say cheating is dead, other than marking the cards, why usually they just throw the people out, tell them never to come back again. However, if you decide that you want to hold them and say this is what the person was doing and here are the cards and we have witnesses to this effect, why then they can be prosecuted. And once you turn them over to the state, why then the state takes it off your hands and prosecutes them itself.

So—and most of the establishments have come to that point. As a matter of fact I was out of the building that one day that they caught this one fellow, and it just made me kind of angry because I would've had him arrested. When they told him they were going to call the police, why he took off real fast.

What is your philosophy of employee relations? You didn't really lose many people to MGM, did you?

Yes, we lost quite a few people to MGM. There's a lot of reasons for it, but the reason that we lost people to MGM is, of course, they came in here and said they weren't going to raise wages and so on and so forth, they did. And with their vast number of employees in

Las Vegas and the studios and so on and so forth, they were supposedly able to offer a better insurance package than I could possibly afford here because of the sheer numbers that they have, so a lot of people went for the insurance benefits, a lot of people went for the glamour of it, and a lot of people went for the fact that they thought they could make more tips out there, which is fine. You can't rule out a person for trying. And as I said before in a previous interview, you never break a person in for yourself. When you take and school somebody and break them in for a job that you have to offer, be it Craps, "21," Roulette Wheel, whatever, why there comes a point in their learning that they feel that they're better than you think they are, and it's not a clash, but they start seeking employment elsewhere where they think they can get ahead faster or they can get up to top wages quicker than you would give them because you started with them. It's just like the father and son in a business; the son never quite meets the father's expectations, so consequently he's held down more until the father thinks that he's good enough to advance.

And so we did lose quite a few employees, and we've broken in a lot of employees in the games, and we're going to continue to do so because that's the only way we can exist. And a place like MGM, I think they did wrong; they robbed, and I say actually robbed a lot of places of their better help, which is fine, and I wish them all good luck. I hear a lot of things now that some of the people who left are not that satisfied out there, but again, as I said before, you make your own bed, you lie in it. And these people that did leave me, no hard feelings or anything else, but if I have replaced them—and I have—why they're not welcome back here any more because, you see, when you have an exodus of employees and you have a lot of break-ins, it hurts your

business, as well as mistakes cost you money. So consequently I feel that these people worked for me for many, many years, and I gave them what I could with the business that I have, and evidently if the grass looks that much greener on the other side, then I think they should continue to eat it. I never did that when I worked for somebody, and I really didn't expect it. But everybody that left me, of course, said, "We're sorry to leave you; you've been a wonderful boss, and if you could meet what we expect to get, why we would never consider leaving you," which, of course that is a compliment in itself.

As a matter of fact, at the present time I'm wearing a belt buckle that was given to me by my employees when they left, you see. That's what they thought of me, but by the same token, the belt buckle doesn't replace the bodies that I lost and these bodies could have stayed here as long as I live, because I don't fire people indiscriminately for small infractions of rules or mistakes that they made or wins or losses on the games. I'm not that type of person, and again we'll go into the philosophy of that; I'll be able to tell you more of why I feel that way and why I have, shall we say, the rapport with the employees that I have.

I'll go into that at the present time. Number one, when my dad first opened the place here and I came to work here, I was the boss's son. And in those days, that was about a five hundred pound weight on my shoulders to begin with because the employees here resented me because they knew that I could walk around here like God and nobody could do anything about it. And which, in effect, was true. However, when I left high school and I decided that I was going into this business, I decided that I was going to learn it and learn it well. If it was "21," I would pick out the best "21" dealer I could find, or what everybody thought was the best "21" dealer, and I would

sort of watch every move that he made and try to copy him as much as I could. And then if I saw somebody else that had a little more finesse in certain areas, I would add to what I'd already learned from what was supposed to be the best or considered to be the best and add this other little finesse to it because I wanted to be the best of what there was. And I learned "21;" I learned Craps, which is dice; and I learned the Roulette Wheel; and I learned Faro Bank; and I learned it well.

But I'll never forget one night I was working the graveyard shift—come to work at one o'clock in the morning, got off at nine—and there was an old Faro Bank dealer by the name of Ira Stewart; I'll never forget him. Of course, in those days Faro Bank dealers were considered the elite of the profession, and you could set your clock by the time that they came to work. If they were due to work at one o'clock, they would actually physically sit in the dealer's chair at one o'clock, not three seconds before or three seconds later, they were there at one o'clock sharp. I mean you could set your clock by it. So anyway, Ira was a hoarder of money and a good Faro Bank dealer, but he wore old clothes; his socks had holes in the heels, and when he would accumulate a goodly amount of money—he was not a drinker, but he was a gambling-holic, and he would start to play and he would keep playing until he was broke. He was a character, really a character.

However, one night I came in and the shift boss (Bill Panelli was his name, dead now; he also became later a key employee of Harrah's Club when he first opened up on Virginia Street over here), but anyway, Bill was the shift boss and he went to Ira, the Faro Bank dealers—you have your dealer and then you have another dealer in the lookout chair and he checks for any mistakes that the dealer might make because it's a very complicated

game. So you have two people and you'll sit a half an hour up in the lookout chair and then you deal for a half an hour because you have to concentrate quite a bit. So Bill came over to Ira and he said, "Ira, you know, this is the boss's son," he says; "he's going to learn to deal Faro Bank," he says, "so show him everything you can and help him out in any way you can."

And I'll never forget Ira's statement, he said, "To hell with him." He said, "Let him learn the way I did."

So I looked at him and I said, "Okay, fellow, you just made a statement and you got the right guy." So I sat down in the dealer's chair, and I never asked him for one nickel's worth of help from there on out. And I learned that game by sheer guts, period. And I became a very good Faro Bank dealer, and I also learned every bit of finesse there was about the game, and without blowing my own horn, because I don't believe in it. (We were talking earlier today about people who fly, and the people who are the most quiet and the less arrogant about flying are the ones who survive.) And I don't say this in an egotistical manner, but I became a much better dealer than Ira Stewart ever thought he could be, and it was only through determination. There were probably better dealers than myself and probably a lot worse, but I just determined that if I tackled a job I wanted to be the best there was or at least among the best that there was, and I did become that.

But then after my dad sold [leased] the place and I went into the Army, then I went in, as you know, I started at the top and strangely enough worked my way down, as it were. But, after my dad sold [leased] the place, I went in the Army. Well, then after I left Reno (of course I was still my own boss here in Reno, in Shorty's Club in Sparks and so on), but after I left Reno and went to Las Vegas, we had the Faro Bank down there, and we got broke by

Nick the Greek and so on. Well, before that, when I was around Reno here, I went around looking for a job. They said, "What do you need work for? You're John Petricciani's son; he's got plenty of money." So that was fine, another thing that kind of teed me off, but neither here nor there. So when I went down to Vegas and went broke in Faro Bank; I went to work in the El Rancho, and I started out as a "21" dealer, and I worked my way up as you know, I said before. And, I think that I can relate much better to the employees that I have, have had, and will continue to have because I know what they're thinking, I know how they feel, I know what their way of life is, because I came from the top to the bottom, and then went on back up again. So, when they tell me something that they feel is wrong or they're being pushed around, which I don't stand for from any of my key employees—I don't want them harassing my dealers or even the porter that goes around and cleans the floor; I want them to treat them like a human being and if they want something done, to ask them politely and not say, "I'm the boss and you're going to do this just because I'm the boss, because that's— I just don't condone it. I don't like it. I don't feel it, because I've had it done to me you see. And that's the only way a person learns, really, what the other person is thinking, and you have to realize that "there but for the grace of God go I." And if you're in that position, you wouldn't want people harassing you, pushing you around, and calling you a dummy or this or that or the other thing because maybe some people don't have— they have the brains, but they don't have the intelligence that God gave you; it's not that you're so darn smart, it's just that God gave you a break in life, and if you can think a little better than somebody else or you can conduct yourself a little better than somebody else, you don't have any physical afflictions

or anything, why then you're just a lucky person. And I consider myself very lucky, so therefore I don't lord this over somebody who is—well, I hate to use the word—but my inferior mentally, physically, or—I can't say educationwise because my education has been limited. But [it's] surprising what people can learn with just plain old common sense.

So possibly that's why I have the rapport with my employees and why they like me so much because I know that they can—well, they're just human beings; I consider them my children. I know that they go out and get drunk; I know they get in trouble; I know that sometimes they can't pay the rent, and they feel that they can come to me and—they all call me "the Godfather"—they can come to me and they know they're going to get bailed out somehow or other. And maybe I'm wrong in doing this, but by the same token, I've seen people in this business work it around the other way and when people come for help, not even listen to them or turn them away, and it's strange—when a person is that way, then the employee loses respect for them and they find a way to tax them, and they tax them in many different ways, possibly slowdown of work; sometimes they've been known to even steal from their employer, but it's really a psychological way of showing their resentment. It's not so much that the person is a thief, but they say, "Okay fellow, I gave you a chance to help me, I gave you a chance to let me remain honest and you turned me down, you turned me away, so consequently you don't deserve my complete respect; you don't deserve my complete honesty." And you'll find that this is true.

And it's not only true in this business; you look in the grocery store business or the employees—I mean it's a national trend. If they could stop all of the thievery that goes on in grocery stores, for instance, the prices

of food would come down tremendously. But it's a national problem and it's not mine alone. But I've seen this happen with people, and I can say truthfully that I've never done that and never really had to, but I could see sometimes the resentment in people that I work with, and this is their philosophy. "This person is not a nice person, they deserve to be taxed," and they call it a "tax"—they're not stealing from them; they call it a "tax." So you see, perhaps it's better to help the person along the way, and they pay it back, as opposed to putting them in dire straits where they have to steal, and sometimes they even get to a position where they have to steal. And I've been in the position of where I've needed help, myself, and caused by my own actions, but I've always been able to go and get the money from someplace and to tide me over. (This is when I was broke down in Vegas a couple times.) And it wasn't pleasant, but I was able to get the money and pay it back and so on. But some people don't have what we call "the ace in the hole" to go to. And when you don't have it, it's tough. So possibly that's why I have the rapport with my employees. When I come in the door in the morning, if it's the colored porter or a crippled change girl or one of the shift bosses or whatever, they all get treated the same—"Good morning, how are you? How you doing?" That's it. Makes a lot of difference—at least I feel it has with me. And again, [as] I say, I can go to sleep at night, no problem sleeping at all; as a matter of fact I fall asleep in the chair. Some people can't do that. I feel sorry for them.

How do you feel about unions and union organizing efforts in the clubs?

Well, that goes back to what I was just talking about now. I have worked for people as an employee for a good many years of

my life. Unions were good during the time of the sweat shops and so on where they actually used and abused people, but in today's labor market and so on, I think the union has outlived its usefulness. And I'll tell you—you're going to say, "Well, why?" Okay, you look at the national trend; the workers themselves are leaving the unions. They're corrupt from within, and that's visible in every union that you've ever read about. Their pension funds or whatever the people have contributed to—the unions require a check-off list, which means that they don't trust their own members, and require the employer to hold out of their paychecks the union dues. So, now if you have a place—we have no union here in the club nor do we want one, and I don't feel that my employees have to have somebody to come to me to bargain for them. I don't need the middle man because all that does is cost them money and me time, and plus, money also, because of the various ways that they do business. They come in and they bother my people when they're working and so on and so forth. And why the Congress of the United States can't see what's going on within the unions, is beyond me. Of course, the taxpayer's revolt is showing that people are becoming fed up with everything the Congress is doing, and it's starting at the state level now, and I'm sure that it'll get to the national level in a very short time.

However, they're now considering legislation where people can come in and organize your employees right on the job, and you can't do anything about it in your own establishment. Then, I think Congress is considering passing this bill, and then strengthening the teeth of the National Labor Relations Board, which we as taxpayers are supporting, to come in and find something wrong with the way we're conducting ourselves with our employees or with the

unions and being able to punish us without recourse. And I just don't see this, because sooner or later, business—you know, business creates jobs and jobs creates business. And when you get that middleman in there, harassing both sides, then you're going to come to a law of diminishing returns; and when that happens then you're going to have a depression. Now the federal government has gone into competition with private business; we can't as private business afford to operate at a deficit. The federal government has been operating at a deficit for I don't know how many years, but if I don't operate at a profit, I can't go to the bank and borrow money to do construction or whatever the case may be. The federal government abides by union laws, they abide by this, they abide by that, and they pay so much higher than we can afford to pay and still stay in business that they've gone into competition with us. And it's fact—I mean there's no way in the world that you can refute it.

And then you come to unemployment—of course, I'm getting away from unions now—but you come to unemployment; with what I can afford to pay and what unemployment pays, my people can take unemployment tax-free and make more money than I can afford to pay them. So now they wonder why people won't work. Do you blame them? No. You give it to them, I mean why not take it. I don't blame them at all, but insofar as unions are concerned I have no use for them, and I think they've outlived their usefulness, really, because we're in a period of inflation and inflation is caused, again, by big government spending and the government jobs where they give everything away that people—they have three people to do the work of one person, that one person could put out.

You go back to the newspapers here, when the construction was bad here in town, and

your carpenters, if I recall, took a cut in pay and promised a full day's work for a full day's pay. So that means that evidently before that, they weren't giving you a full day's work, were they? I mean they admitted to themselves that they weren't giving you a full day's work, that they were fluffing off on the job, for more money; now when things got tough they were going to give you a full day's work for less pay. So when you read things like this, I mean any intelligent person has to say, "Well, what is going on around here?"

Right now the Culinary Workers Union has given a couple of "sweetheart contracts," what they call sweetheart contracts, to—well, one was the Overland, and then they closed down, so they lost that. And there's another one at the Silver Club in Sparks, and they gave them a real easy contract to live with, *but*, we are paying our employees and giving our employees more benefits than the sweetheart contract calls for, so what do I need a union for? Now I've given you my dissertation on unions [chuckling]. I have no use for them. I've never belonged to one. I never felt that I had to belong to one, but I'm an individualist. And if I didn't like the place I was working, the tools I was working with, or the boss I was working for, I always quit and went and found a new job. I didn't demand that he change his ways; whether he was wrong or whether I was wrong made no difference. There were other places to go and other things to do. I've been on both sides, I've been on the working side and I've been on the management side. And, I say that unions have no place any more. This is my opinion; I'm entitled to it.

To wit, a couple of days ago in the paper, some union organizer from the L. A. area was up here. Did you read the article in the paper? He said that they were going to try to organize the culinary workers unions and different other job areas in the town, but they

were going to leave the dealers, the gaming alone because they knew that they handled money and so on and so forth, and that the gambling operators had good rapport with their employees and they knew that they couldn't break into that. It was in the paper here just a couple of days ago; it was the most asinine thing I ever read in my life. So, enough for that.

What kind of an effect did the phasing out by the government of the silver dollar in 1964 have on the industry?

None. No. Number one, we were able to buy silver dollars for quite some time after that, and the banks had quite a surplus of them and so on and so forth. As far as the industry was concerned, we just went to chips, dollar chips; and as a matter of fact, it was better for us, other than the places that had an abundance of dollar slot machines, but other than the dollar slot machines, it didn't mean a darn thing because we could buy the chips for twenty-seven cents apiece. And we didn't have any money out on the tables; all we had was chips, and all they had to do was redeem them in the cashier's cage.

On the dice games, it helped us quite a bit because when the dice would hit the silver dollars, they would chip and sometimes they might get a little burr on them that would throw them in favor of the player because a certain number would come up more often than not. And it might work in reverse and come up in favor of the house. And that, in effect, would not be the actual percentage of the game, so consequently we had to keep checking the dice and make sure that they didn't have little burrs and chips on them from hitting the silver dollars, and now we don't have that problem. Of course, we're back to the phony silver dollar, as it were, but we still

don't use them on the Crap game any more, so actually they gave us a bonus.

But insofar as the silver dollar going out, you know they weren't used anyplace in the United States except here, and after getting away from them myself—I used to have silver dollars in my pockets all the time; they wore out my pockets—now with the paper dollars, why I just keep them in with the rest of my money, and it's a much easier way to handle money. So other than the dollar slot machines, which now we use the dollars—phony dollars I call them—why it had no effect on us. And of course the first money that was made with the silver dollars when they started hoarding them and so on and so forth (the first people that got them and sold them at a profit) — and now there are no more silver dollars and there are no more in circulation. And the people that bought them at a high price are still hoarding them; I don't know what they're going to do with them, but they're gone and it's just something that passes, and after it's gone, it's gone. It's just like when the steamship gave way to the airplane or the railroads gave way to the airplane. The railroad was the ultimate in travel. The sailboat was the ultimate in travel in the 1700s, and then along came the steamboat, and after the steamboat came the airplane, and then the big airliners that we have now. The next thing will probably be rocket ships and all these things'll phase out, and they'll become a part of history. So actually the silver dollars didn't mean that awful much.

There's only one thing that I'm sorry about—I was prewarned about what was going to happen, in a conversation one night in Las Vegas in the Stardust. I was sitting down having my breakfast; I happened to be working the graveyard shift as a matter of fact at that time, and a fellow that is dead now, Ken Johnson (I first met him when he

was the manager of the Washoe County Golf Course; he later became a state senator and so on), Ken was a good friend of mine, gone through all of the phases of growing up in Reno and so on, and he and I sat down and he says, "Sil, you got any money," he says, "buy all the silver dollars you can." Now where he got his information I don't know, but he says, "Buy all the silver dollars you can," he said, "because they're going to be phased out."

I said, "You're crazy." And I didn't buy any silver dollars.

It wasn't three months later, there wasn't a dollar to be had, you know, at a dollar price. And of course, that's one of the opportunities that a person has, and they don't take advantage of it. But I guess that happens throughout your life from time to time. If a person was able to define which opportunities were the best and go ahead and take advantage of them, why they'd be jillionaires, not millionaires, but jillionaires. But, Kenny told me that they were going to do that, and I didn't believe him. I thought he was crazy. He was sure right; but actually having an effect on the industry—it didn't bother the industry at all. As a matter of fact when I was down in Las Vegas, before that, most of the casinos down there on the Crap games were using dollar chips anyway, because it was more convenient for them and like I say, it didn't break up the dice and they could use dice for one whole shift as opposed to having to change them probably in the middle of the shift or maybe three or four times a night, because of the damage that was done by the silver dollars. So, at least I don't feel and I never heard of anybody in the gaming business say that it was bothering anything, other than as I say the dollar slot machines, and those kept going for quite some time with what was available.

The thing that is going to hurt the gaming industry is if they change the size of the dollar

they have now, which they're contemplating doing and making the silver dollar just a little bit larger than a quarter, and they've been talking about this and the Gaming Association's been fighting it because that means that you're going to have to spend money to change the size of the silver dollar machines, the coin acceptors and so forth, and that's going to cost about a hundred dollars a machine, which is going to be quite an expense to quite a few people. And for no reason. For the life of me, I can't see the reason for it other than possibly that the government has shrunk the dollar so far that they're going to make it smaller! But outside of that, I can't think of any damage that the dollars ever did, the silver dollars being gone, just like the dimes and quarters. The nickel is the only true coin we have left now; the dimes and quarters and the halves are all sandwiched—very little silver in them. So you see, it really didn't make that much difference, other than people got a hold of them and hoarded them; now they've got them in their basements or wherever they've got them and I don't know what they're worth, or if they're worth anything, other than a dollar. But the first people, the only people, that made a killing on the silver dollars being phased out, were the people that bought them at a dollar apiece and resold them the first time, and then decided that certain dollars were going to be valuable and others were not, and then sold the more valuable ones at higher prices and so on, and made them collector's items— and you know how those things work. So. But other than that, as you can see, gaming is flourishing as much as it ever did, and maybe much more, as a matter of fact. So I can't see that phasing the silver dollars out did one thing to hurt the gaming business. And actually they were only being used in Nevada anyway. The rest of the country wasn't using silver dollars; no

place in the country were they using silver dollars outside of Nevada. So they take it away from Nevada and people start playing dollar bills; what's the difference, just so they play. All right.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAMING INDUSTRY

Now discussion of the development of the gambling industry, observation on gambling pre-1931. Pre-1931, of course, I was a rather young fellow, and I really wasn't allowed in the place, but my dad was a partner upstairs in the old Palace Club pre-1931, and I did go up there. And gaming in those days was strictly all men. They had the same games except for they had one game of Faro Bank which was played up until the late forties, and then it went out: I talked about that in a previous discussion. But, from what I could see, it was a cheaper form of gambling because after 1929 and the Crash, why twenty-five cents and fifty cents was a lot of money to be able to gamble.

And, it was a smoke-filled room, and just the oldtimers would go up there and they'd shoot Craps and play "21" and so on, but no women were allowed in the gaming establishments. There was no air conditioning per se. It was just kind of really smelly and dirty to what we have today. And it went on that way until places came downstairs and on the street level and opened up.

And, changes after legalization—from what I could see there wasn't an awful lot of change in the way gaming was conducted except that it was all open and people could come in and out, and women started coming into the gaming establishments at that time. And, customers, as opposed to what we have today, were much, much less, but the reason for that was we didn't have the population explosion that we have today and there weren't that many people traveling. In other words, coming up from Los Angeles was almost a two-day trip. You know, people just didn't travel that far unless they had to. And we did get a lot of people out of the San Francisco area; of course Reno always did get people from that area, and Las Vegas didn't come into its own from the Los Angeles area until the early forties, from there, and then they didn't have the number of people coming in that they do today with the advent of the jet airplane and the faster automobile. The changes in transportation made for greater numbers of people coming into our areas.

And, effects on businesses—why it [legalization] spurred the economy in the community quite a bit because of the people that it employed and people coming into the town. In days gone by, they didn't have restaurants in the gaming establishments like they do today, and [after legalization] restaurants flourished, and all kinds of businesses flourished in the town because of the influx of population and the people that it put to work.

Okay. Now we come into changes in types of customers. Well, as I said, we talked about the numbers of customers and coming into the open. Changes in types of customers was—the advent of the woman coming into the gaming establishment.

And new methods of operation—actually gaming, the operation of gaming didn't change appreciably until oh, I would say the early fifties, and when it started, gaming was audited by the establishments themselves, and they started going into not so much computerized, but they were getting new ideas how to operate their business from bigger business. And they went in, got daily reports and all that kind of stuff. Before that why you had daily reports, but you had them in your mind; it wasn't really bookwork or anything like that. But, in the fifties, why then it started getting down to real serious business, and each department was audited and you knew day by day what every facet of your business was doing. But other than that, the gaming per se is just—well, it's operated the same; it hasn't changed over many, many years because the percentages haven't changed. The only percentage that you can change on "21" games is like we had in the old days. In the thirties all you had was straight "21;" you couldn't double down or split aces and things like that. But during the fifties or the late forties and early fifties, why those things

started to change, and they would let people double down on any two cards and get one card. Then they'd let them double down on any two cards, and if they had an eight, like a six and a two, and then they caught a three on the third card, why then they would let them redouble if they wanted to. But back and forth it got down to where the best one, which we're dealing right now, is to split two aces and get one card on each, and that's it. If you get the third ace, you can't resplit it. And they double down now on ten and eleven only, so that they don't have the hassle if they have a nine; and then they catch a deuce with a nine and have eleven so it's a redouble and all that. It just kind of was a harassment, really, and caused a lot of arguments. So now it's just down to the basic double down on ten or eleven, get one card, and split aces and get one card.

And, Craps evolved from having—like in the field you just paid even money on everything in the field; now they pay double on two aces, and triple on two sixes, which was a decrease in the percentage for the house. But it spurred the play in the field, so I think one offset the other. It really didn't make that much difference. Then, years ago they dealt straight Craps; you just make a come bet and go on a number and take single odds. Now we have double odds. And then what they call a place bet, was unheard of in the Reno area for—as a matter of fact, we dealt the first place bet in here in oh, the late thirties, and it was something completely new to the area. But now everybody deals place bets and buy bets, and it's kind of a long, drawn out procedure. Of course all the customers know how to play, and place bets, and buy bets and all that on the Crap games, so there's no really big secret about it; and I don't have to go into details of it because when people—if people ever read this history, why, they'll know what I'm talking about.

And other than that, why the method of dealing the games has remained the same, has remained constant throughout the ages. There really isn't an awful lot you can change. I might add one thing, that during our inflationary period which we're having now, the gaming establishments can't increase or decrease their percentages on their games because they're more or less set. So the only way that we can combat inflation is to get more volume because there's no way in the world that you can change the percentage on a game. The only thing you can change the percentage on would be a slot machine, and if you make your slot machine too tight, you're not going to get any play anyway.

So this is the one thing that's set, and there's been no provision by the state or the gaming people or the Gaming Control Board or Gaming Commission to alleviate any of the taxes or anything else that we pay. And our expenses have gone up completely, but we still have to live with laws that they put in; you might call them archaic laws insofar as taxation of the gaming industry is concerned. And then of course we get a real big kick out of the newspapers (and the media, as it were), because whenever they get a report from the state on how much the gaming establishments made during the quarter or the year, so on and so forth, all they say is the gamblers made two hundred and thirty million dollars. What they don't realize is that that is gross, and there isn't one nickel's worth of expense taken out of there. So when you say two hundred and thirty million dollars, if you can keep three dollars out of every hundred—and this is before federal income taxes—if you can keep three dollars out of every hundred that you win, then you're doing real good, because all the rest, the other ninety-seven, goes for expenses.

But the media, as you know, if you've read the papers, why they never take that into

account. They never say that Harolds Club or Harrah's Club or the Palace Club made X number of dollars gross, and then their expenses were so much, which are all there on the books, and this is what they wound up with for their stockholders or whatever the case may be. But they never take that into account. So they give everybody in the whole state and probably other states nearby a very false impression of what the gaming industry really makes in net profit. Just wanted to get that on record because it's very easy to say Joe Blow made twenty million dollars, but it cost him twenty-one million to make the twenty; why they never say—. And many of these establishments in their first four or five years of operation have lost money during the year until they build up their volume and business to the point of where they can show a profit.

Now community attitudes—oh, from the time the gaming was legalized and even before that, we never had really any problem with the people in the community. Maybe once in a while some preacher'd get up and holler fire and brimstone and all that, but the community was very well aware of what the gaming industry had done for the state of Nevada, in the early days especially for Reno, and then later on, for Las Vegas. And nobody in the community really had anything against gaining per se.

And the evolution of various games and methods of protecting them—well, I think we've gone through a lot of the different games insofar as what they are. These are the games that they've had (many, many types of games were played throughout the ages prior even to my birth), but the games that appeal to the public and stayed with the gaming industry are "21," Roulette, Craps, and slot machines. And, oh, of course, the Big Six Wheels which we call the Wheel of Fortune—that's more or less of a gimmick. It's a very high percentage

game for the house, and it's just you might call a "change catcher," and just adds a carnival effect, more or less, to the establishment. But the main three games are Roulette, Craps, and "21" or Blackjack, some people prefer to call it.

The "21" as I talked about, they had crimps and waves. Waves is when you wave a card, and then the crimp is where you actually put a fingernail mark—where you just take the card and squeeze it between your fingers and get just a little ridge in there. Then they had "daubs." A daub was a color that they put on the card in certain spots on the card, but that again was visible to the naked eye, and you could catch it real quick. The high and low cards were daubed with a little deeper blue on the blue card and a little redder red on the red cards, but you could catch that real quick. Then, of course, you could have cards manufactured by—back in the thirties they had places that would open the seal on a deck of Bee cards and they would mark them for you. Of course, this was mainly for the inside cheater, the house itself, so that the dealer could see what the cards were coming out. And, but as I say, all of that has gone by the wayside because, again, the strongest thing in the world is square gambling. If you run a square establishment—when I say square I mean an establishment that does not cheat—and you get your volume, why eventually you win all of the money. And it's no question about it because you have the percentage going for you, so there's no question about it. All right, go ahead and ask me a question.

Why, then, do, or did some establishments cheat?

Well, you know, it was a question in those days of survival. The reason they cheated is, you know, you have your lucky guy, your lucky drunk as it were or whatever the case

may be. And he might come in, and it's one of those guys that just can't do anything wrong. And, well, when a person gets inebriated, they don't know how much money they have or how much money they're betting. And sometimes they might win two or three thousand dollars, and in those days you couldn't afford that kind of a loss because there wasn't that kind of money around to enable you to recoup your losses from other customers. So rather than let somebody like that—it's a very poor philosophy I know, but in those days it was the only way they could think. They either did that or go broke. So they just didn't allow those things to happen, or if it did get out of hand, as it were, why they'd see to it that they got it back; and it was just a matter of survival. And I realize it was a wrong way to look at it, but in those days you either protected yourself in any way that you could or you went broke, that's all. You just didn't exist any more. And that was the reason that those things went on. Of course there were some greedy people, too, that wanted to get all the money, and I'm kind of proud to say that I've never had anything to do with anything like that, and I don't condone it and don't believe in it, but some people did. And some people were very greedy and others, as I say, did it for the reason that they wouldn't be in business the next day if they didn't. So, it was tough going in the early thirties and late twenties, after the Crash, real tough going. And you just had to do everything you could to stay in business. But with the advent of the opening of gaming and being open and above board and out on the streets, why the only problems we really had was with the smaller places that had one or two little games or something like that. As I say, they were on a short bankroll. And now in these days, the Gaming commission wouldn't allow them to open up unless they had adequate funds to back them up in the event that they had a large loss.

Why, just like I'll give you an example. Yesterday, a fellow came in, bought twenty-five dollars worth of dollar chips on the Crap game. From the twenty-five dollars, he walked away with eighteen hundred dollars, and he would only play on his own hand when he was shooting the dice. There was nothing wrong with the play, don't misunderstand because I watched it myself, but the man when he shot the dice just couldn't do anything wrong. I mean every time he'd roll 'em if he got six for a point, he'd roll a six right back in one or two numbers. The sevens that are supposed to show for the house, would show on what we call the come out roll and he'd win out on that. The sevens were showing, but they were showing at the wrong time. So, now in the old days, this never would have happened, you see, because they never would have let that—. And this man walked out with eighteen hundred dollars, and we'll probably never see him again.

So in the old days, the guy couldn't afford to let eighteen hundred dollars go out his door and never see the guy again, so they just didn't allow it to happen. But, it's one of those things. I mean just to show you, give you an example, some people just get lucky, and when they get lucky, well, we were very fortunate. If the man had played like he should have and taken the odds and all that, he probably would have won ten thousand dollars off of that twenty-five dollars. So you see you have to consider yourself lucky that you didn't lose more.

So, I guess we can go down to observations on evolution of state control of gaming. In the old days, the county and the city (this is after gaming was legalized) took their taxes and so on, and they would—well, the county sheriff collected for the county, and it all depended on how many, for instance, slot machines you had. They'd give you two or three of them free. It was common practice that if you had

a hundred slot machines, you'd pay taxes on ninety-seven; the other three they would let you have free. And, then the State Tax Commission was instituted during the time that I was in the service. There was no state tax commission when I left the service. There was no state tax commission when I left in 1943—strictly county and city, and anybody could come in and pay their fee and get a license and open up a game.

And then the Tax Commission—I don't know how it happened or how it evolved, but they were in existence when I came back from the service, and like I say I just don't know how, when, or where it happened. But then the Gaming Control Board evolved from the State Tax Commission because they had to have somebody to police the activities of the gaming for the Tax Commission and see that they got their taxes and so on and so forth.

And well, the Tax Commission was—in effect, you're talking not Tax Commission, but Gaming Commission. But the Tax Commission was the first one to tax gaming, and then from there evolved the Gaming Commission, which the governor appoints, and the Gaming Control Board.

Now the Gaming Policy Board—I don't know, I think Governor O'Callaghan started that, and he appointed certain people to it. But my recollection, the Gaming Control Board came in with the Gaming Commission, and the Tax Commission then went out of the gaming business and they had their own separate entity. And then like I say, Governor O'Callaghan got these people—these different citizens, of which, of course, I was never invited to, but I think he picked them out of the Gaming Industry Association. And I think they picked all their people from there.

And then of course we come to the Black Book. That was instituted—let's see, we had Governor Sawyer at the time, I believe,

and they came up with the Black Book of undesirable characters, mainly from the East, that were not allowed into any gaming establishment. If they were found there, why they were supposed to be asked to leave; and if the gaming establishment didn't take the proper action, why then they stood a chance of losing their license if they allowed these people to stay. And it still remains the same. There're certain characters in this Black Book that they do not want in the establishments or around them.

And I think—I mean this is my own opinion—the reason for it is that there was a lot of discussion as to whether or not they had these people from the East and these characters had any hidden interest in these establishments. Of course this was mainly in the Las Vegas area. And I guess during the course of the years it was proved that some did have some interests, but I think again it was probably—. I'd have to assume that the federal government—and the reason for the Kefauver investigation was that they felt that there were a lot of these people in the Vegas area that had hidden interests and so on and so forth and they were trying to ferret them out.

Regarding the Black Book, how reasonable is it to expect you to be able to recognize these people and keep them out?

Well, it's kind of a difficult thing; however, I think it's more difficult in Las Vegas than it is here because none of those people ever come into Reno and we never had the problem. And, of course when I was in Vegas, why the Black Book had just come out, and some of the people came into places. The head of the Gaming Commission at that time was Ray Abbaticchio, used to be with the FBI and then became chairman of the Gaming Control Board. And Ray was pretty hep on all of the

supposedly nefarious characters that were in the town, and the Gaming Commission themselves would put surveillance on them when they were in different places. And from that standpoint, why—of course, at that time they didn't have to throw them out or anything or ask them to leave. But the Gaming Control Board itself would put surveillance on them, and then later on of course, these people were all well known to most everybody; they put out photographs of them and so on and so forth. So as far as really being able to see them and know them, why it was no big problem. But it's questionable whether the procedure was proper in [that] they were making police officers out of the people in the gaming industry, in effect. Of course, most of these people got the message, knew there was a Black Book out and so on and so forth. So it really didn't create that much of a problem, as you can attest to by going back through the newspapers. None of these people really came into the places any more, so it really didn't present that much of a problem. Every once in a while they'd probably see one and ask them to leave. I've never in my experience, never had any problems in that respect. And definitely not up here since I came back to Reno because those particular, supposedly nefarious characters just don't come to Reno or haven't so far.

Of course, it's hard to tell what's going to happen now with the advent of all the new hotels and so on. The picture in Reno is changing completely now, so it's hard to tell what might happen. And possibly they might have to put on a little more surveillance in the places, and if they spot one of these people just ask them to leave. But it does put you in a very precarious position insofar as—like myself, I can't be here twenty-four hours a day, and if one of these guys walks in and starts playing in the place, and nobody knows

him and somebody goes and tells the Gaming Commission that this guy was in here playing, I stand a chance to lose my license innocently. And it does pose a problem, but I don't think it poses an insurmountable problem. I think the Gaming Commission or Gaming Control Board would be lenient enough to know that it wasn't done on purpose and a person wasn't welcomed in here. So, of course, if it kept on happening with the same person several times, why then I would say that they would be within their rights to take you to task and ask you just what's going on. But if it happened one time and you weren't aware of it, or somebody didn't recognize or security didn't recognize a person, why I don't think there'd be any real big problem.

Why are individuals listed in the Black Book?

Well, they supposedly have ties with organized crime in the East. The Gaming Commission can give you a better answer to that than I can, and I have to assume that this is what they think—that they have ties with organized crime in the East and they don't want them in the gaming industry in any way, shape or form, even as customers because it would put a blight on the industry in the state of Nevada. But, like that question there, I think it should be directed directly to the Gaming Commission, and they can give you a complete dissertation on it. In other words, don't ask me to outguess them.

And, federal government—when you say attempts to tax, they *did* tax; they taxed the slot machines two hundred and fifty dollars a year. They started out during the war taxing them fifty dollars a year, and then they raised it on up until it got to two hundred and fifty dollars a year. And then just lately Senators Cannon and Bible were able to reduce the tax to fifty dollars a year again to the federal

government, but the state and the Gaming Commission took two hundred dollars for themselves. So the tax was not reduced insofar as we were concerned. The state of Nevada now gets two hundred, and the federal government gets fifty. And then the what we call the bookie tax in the horsebook, which is each person that operates a horsebook and all of the writers, are taxed I don't know what; I think it was fifty dollars a year apiece or something like that. But insofar as taxing the industry per se, why there has been no federal tax; of course that's been due to the surveillance by our local state officials, and one thing is they have kept the state very clean insofar as any nefarious people being in the gaming industry, and they have kept the federal government off our backs to a certain extent.

However, we've had harassment from them insofar as Keno is concerned. They want to declare it a lottery and tax it as a lottery, and of course the state of Nevada has a law against lotteries. So if the federal government taxed it as a lottery, it would have to be run out—they'd have to close it down, and that's been resolved through various methods of operation. But every three or four years, why the IRS comes back with some other little deal that they think up, such as now if a person wins (it's on a graduating scale)—but if a person wins X number of dollars, why they have to take their Social Security number and address and so on, so that they can make sure they report this winning on their income tax for the next year. And it's been a source of aggravation and harassment for our customers. In effect, what the federal government is doing is keeping people from playing because they don't want the hassle of being investigated and probably audited in their own hometown; so they say, "Well, what the hell, I just won't play any more."

Of course, this is the federal government's method; if you have a successful business, they try to find some way to either break you or ruin you or something. The goose that lays the golden egg they don't want around for some reason. I don't know, I just don't see their line of thinking, but that's what we're saddled with, and evidently our illustrious senators and congressmen can't see it. Some of them should be taken back and put into business, and see what they've really done to business in their paperwork and everything else. Just the paperwork is voluminous and it drives you up a wall. You have to hire more people to prove nothing.

In 1962 you flew to Washington to meet with the IRS to oppose the proposed ten percent tax on Keno. What was this proposed tax?

Well, it was to impose a ten percent tax like they did on the bookies in the horsebooks. If a person made a wager, for instance if they bet a dollar Keno ticket, then they would have to pay a dollar and ten cents for it. And then they wanted to license all of the Keno writers at fifty dollars apiece a year just like they do with the horsebooks. And we went and opposed that completely, and we got it off.

Why did they want to do that?

Harassment.

Did they have a justification for it?

All of a sudden they just come up with, you know—some little bureaucrat gets in an office, has nothing to do, and he dreams up a scheme. That's it.

When you met with the IRS, who was there, what was it like?

Oh, it was real nice. I went from Vegas representing the Stardust. There was no association at that time, and we went there, a group from Nevada, from Reno, went over there and then a group from Las Vegas. And we all sat at a great big conference table with the Commissioner of Internal Revenue. I forget what his name was, but he was appointed by President Kennedy and so on. His opening statement was, "Gentlemen," he says, "I'm the Commissioner of Internal Revenue." He says, "I've been appointed by the President of the United States, and I'm not here to be"—oh, what would be the word he put—"swayed one way or the other until I hear all the statements," he says, "and my word is law."

So that was fine, so we went on and discussed what the problems were. In other words, the federal government was of the opinion that Keno was a lottery, and in so doing should be taxed as a lottery, the same as a horsebook. A horsebook in effect is a lottery because all the payoffs and everything are based on a certain percentage of the take and a certain amount of it can be paid out, prorated according to the amount that's bet on the horse and so on and so forth. So in effect it's a lottery. They claim Keno is a lottery, but I disagree with them. And in disagreeing with them, why, I think we proved our point; they didn't impose the ten percent tax.

But what they did do was stop—the reason they called it a lottery was the fact that a person could play four or five games in advance and then leave town and come back seven or eight days later, and if they won on those games, why they could come back and check the records and collect their money. So, the gaming laws of the state of Nevada— and I can quote them *verbatim*. And of course, Senator Pat McCarran, he wasn't there at the time; Bible and Cannon were in office

at the time. But when the gaming laws were formulated in the state of Nevada, they were interpreted by the United States government, and they went like this. It said: "The bets must be placed, the winners determined, and the payoffs made in the presence of all the people participating in the game." So that means now we have a sign up on our Keno game. It says that all winnings must be collected before the start of the calling of the next game, so that they have to be present while the game is being—in other words, they play their ticket, the balls are drawn, and then winners are determined, and then they must collect their winnings before the start of the calling of the next game. But in effect the federal government worked in our favor because strangely enough, if a person won twenty-five thousand dollars and they didn't come and collect that twenty-five thousand dollars before the start of the calling of the next game, we, by federal law, do not have to pay them because they didn't present the ticket at the proper time; they were not there while the game was being called or whatever the case may be. So, in effect we really wouldn't have to pay them, and they could go to the Gaming Commission or anything else and they say, "There's the law." And the Gaming Commission abides by this law, so consequently if you're going to play Keno or play any other game, then make sure that you're there when you win. You have to be there while the game is being played. So in effect, they worked in our favor, which is fine.

Now when you say attitudes towards gambling, what do you mean? There have been no other investigations that I know of. If they have been, they've been under cover as far as the federal government's concerned—other than the Kefauver investigation, which was blown up really way out of proportion, as I discussed earlier, and really didn't prove an

awful lot. To me it was an effort in futility, but when you say attitudes toward gambling—.

The federal government's attitudes—.

Well, you really don't know, you really don't know. They tax it, and they derive their income taxes from it, from the gaming establishments, and I guess they treat it just as another business. And yet, it's a very gray area as to what their attitude towards gambling really is. They've had a big write-up; as a matter of fact, there was a commission on gambling for the federal government where it was clearly evaluated and discussed, and there's a book on it now. I haven't had a chance to read the whole thing, but the attitude that I could get from it (as a matter of fact, our Attorney General Bob List was on this commission), and the attitude that I can get from it is that they know that there's going to be gambling going on one way or another; it has been from time immemorial, and even soldiers rolled dice for Christ's clothes, if you recall. So, gambling is nothing new, and it, like prostitution, is—I don't think it's ever going to be eradicated; and as long as it's going to be, why they might as well have it out in the open. I think that's the attitude of the federal government right now according to this report from the commission. And, as a matter of fact, they'd be better off to have it out in the open.

Just as a note, as it were, they put a ten percent tax on wagering on horses. You ask about the federal government—they put this ten percent tax on wagering. In other words, if you go and bet two hundred dollars someplace, why then you have to put down two hundred and twenty dollars to bet two hundred dollars on a horse. Okay? Now, that twenty dollars goes to the federal government. So, in effect, what they did is they put a lot of

bookies out in the alley here that will take your bets without the tax, and naturally anybody is a fool to pay twenty dollars tax when he can go out and make the same bet and get the same results and odds without paying the twenty dollars. So what it did, it put the hoodlum out in the alley again, to take these bets and broke the legitimate book. Okay, fine.

So now in the last couple of three years, they have reduced that tax to two percent, and they think they've done a beautiful thing. Well, what they've done, in effect, is nothing. Either cut out the tax completely, which would drive the bookie out of the alley because then the people would go to the legitimate man—but as long as they can save two percent they're still going to go to this guy. What's the difference between eight percent or two percent? If you go to the grocery store and one day Albertson's has an item that's knocked down eight percent, and Valu-Mart has got it down to two percent, where are you going to go to get your product? And if you can get it at Sears for no percentage over—in other words at the right price, where are you going to go get it? You might spend twenty cents worth of gasoline to go over there, but you're going to go where you can get the least percentage, right? So, when they dropped it down to two percent, it was a fallacy. You know, I wonder sometimes what makes grown men think or how grown men think. It's ridiculous. But that's government I guess, or maybe they haven't studied it enough or don't know what they're talking about. But that's the way it is.

Is there anything that the people in the industry can do to get them to eliminate that two percent tax?

Well, you're dealing with—you have two senators from the state of Nevada and one congressman, and these three poor guys have

to go up there and fight the whole United States government, and they've done a wonderful job. They've done a wonderful job, believe me. But, it's the old deal about three guys, you know, David and Goliath, as it were. You have to convince these people [the federal government] that what they're doing is wrong, but they're looking at betting—they think for some reason or other—I don't know why they think that taxing something is going to stop something, when all they do is just make it worse because the average John Q. Public—he doesn't care where he puts his bet, as long as he can bet. So they drive the legitimate bookie out of business, and they go to the guy in the alley 'cause they don't have to pay any tax. So in effect they've lost the fifty-dollar tax for the writer; they've lost the income that the legitimate bookie would have made if they'd just let him do his business without putting that—. And all that tax was a harassment, just a harassment, that's all, because they didn't have open horsebook parlors anyplace in the United States except the state of Nevada, you see. Everyplace else all the betting had to be done at the track. Of course, you have a pretty big cartel there—the racetracks. They don't want outside booking. But it again is just like gaming and prostitution; it's going to flourish no matter what you do. I mean people are going to gamble, they're going to bet horses, and it they're in Timbuktu and there's a race being run at Aqueduct, they're going to bet that horse if they can with somebody. So they're really not stopping a darn thing, and why they can't get it in their thick skulls I don't know, but they just don't.

Why do you think that other types of gambling like dog racing and horse racing and that kind of thing don't develop here?

Population. It's very simple. We have an influx of population here on the weekends and

so on; we don't have a permanent population to support it. Racing has been tried in Las Vegas, has been tried in Reno, and dog racing has never been tried here, but I don't think that would go either because you just do not have the population to support it. And, number two, it would take away—if you took the weekend influx of people that comes in here and they all go out to a track, then what's going to happen with your gaming establishments. So actually we don't want it. And it would just be a weekend function anyway. So it really wouldn't be that lucrative.

Would it be, do you think, actively opposed by say the industry association, if someone tried to put it in?

Well, I can't answer for them, but I would oppose it because I have enough taxes and enough problems, payroll and this and that and the other thing now, without having somebody come along and add more to it. And plus the fact that—you see, you have the racetracks and dog racing—are just like the federal government. The smaller person is the one that picks up most of the tab, and all the people—all the little people that pay taxes is really what keeps the government going. It's not the one or two or three big ones. And with horse racing and this and that and the other thing, why you have all these small two-dollar bettors, five-dollar bettors, and it takes a big influx of population to be able to support a racetrack because they don't have that many fifty-, hundred-dollar bettors or a thousand-dollar bettors. And all these little people go in and bet their little two dollars or five dollars, whatever they can afford, and they're dyed-in-the-wool. You go down to some of the tracks in Los Angeles or in California or back East, you'll find all these little people, holes in their shoes, holes in their stockings; and you know

when they talk about gaming in the state of Nevada as opposed to what they deal to at a racetrack, why they ought to be ashamed of themselves, because we can hold our heads up in saying that the people that come and play in our establishments can afford it. But when you get these big tracks, and you want to watch these people sitting on newspapers out on the pavement on the cement out there, and avid—oh, avid horseplayers, of course. But again, psychologically if they don't play the horses, they're going to play the numbers racket or they're going to play something. They have to gamble; these people just have to gamble. So, I have mixed emotions about it, but again like I say, around here, we just wouldn't have the population. Even Las Vegas with its big influx of population, right now its static population couldn't support a track. You see the racetrack has to go for a meet, what they call a meet, every day of that they're open or whatever it is, and they have to take in so much money every day to be able to meet their payrolls and so on and so forth. So, I don't think it would be lucrative for them or for the community. Next question.

Would you like to see gambling develop in any other states?

Well, when you say would I like to see it develop, everybody is greedy—no, I wouldn't like to see it develop anyplace else. But we talked about before, if they put it in states like—well, like New Jersey now, these manufacturing states, big manufacturing centers, it's going to become a problem with them, I think, in time because it's not a resort area, as it were. Of course, Atlantic City used to be a big resort area and now it no longer is; they're trying to build it back up. But if you take these big resort areas, and gaming per se is just like alcoholism; a person can become addicted to it. They lose

their paycheck, kids don't eat, the factories have absenteeism, and all of a sudden it's a question of what's going to prevail.

The big manufacturing people say, "Well, we're paying taxes, we're keeping your schools open," this, that and the other thing.

And the gaming industry says, "Well, if they don't play here, they're going to play someplace else." But then between the drinking and the gambling, why then it becomes a deterrent to work and it causes a lot of problems. They've tried it before and it hasn't worked in these big areas. And, of course, anyplace in the United States that they would open gaming, other than California, is not going to hurt Nevada.

Now if they open gaming in California, in the state, then I think Nevada would be very hard put to survive. But I doubt very much that California will ever, just for the reasons that I stated. And they have many, many groups of, shall we say, Puritan people that do not want it. And I think if it was put before a vote of the people today in California, why it would be turned down.

And gaming is just like the entertainment of going to a movie or going to a floor show or anything like that; people should be able to go to it, when they've finished what they have had to do for their weekend or whatever, go home, go back to work, and not have it before them every day of the week, because if they do—they lost during the weekend—they're going to try to go back next day to recoup their losses, and this is where the problem comes in. As it is now, we get an influx of population from California or other parts of the country. They have so much to spend; they come here; they have their good time; they enjoy their gaming; and then they go home and they probably don't come back for another year. They'll save up their money; I had many people that come maybe every two years, and

they'll take one year and go on a vacation to Hawaii or someplace else, or someplace in the United States or Europe, whatever. And then the next year they'll come back here. But they don't come here every weekend all the time. And, but if it were put before them everyday, then again you'd have that problem.

So, it just wouldn't work out, and plus the fact that I don't want to see Nevada hurt. I was born and raised here and this is my home state, and this has been our industry for a long, long time. And if they opened it up in other states, they would have a lot of problems with it to start with; but still, it would hurt the state of Nevada, in any state that's close to the state of Nevada. We'll take Arizona, Utah, or Washington, Oregon; any of those states would tend to hurt the state of Nevada. So you say would I like to see it. No, I would not. That's just being very frank about it. But for other reasons than greed.

So when I say greed, I think Nevada has proved itself to be a state that's able to handle the gaming without any problems, and the people that are in it have invested a lot of money, and they are entitled to a fair return for their money. So when I say greed, that's for a want of a better word. But we should be greedy enough to want to keep the gaming in the state of Nevada and not have the competition from other states, because you can see that if California, for instance, had floor shows and this, that and the other thing, then why would people drive two hundred and fifty miles to come to Nevada? Pretty soon—I have to quote Governor Sawyer one time and he said, "If the state of Nevada didn't have gaming, it wouldn't need a governor; it would need a caretaker." And I agree with him wholeheartedly.

If New Jersey has enforcement problems, is that going to affect Nevada? Do you think maybe the federal government would step in?

Well, you know, I wonder about—everybody says, “Will the federal government step in, step in, step in?” It you go back, there’s no federal law against gaming, so consequently, if they have problems the trend now is to get away from too much federal government. So if the federal government decided that they didn’t want gaming *per se*, then they would probably try to find a way to tax it out of existence. And, they’ve tried several things along the way with us on our Keno and so on and so forth. The Internal Revenue Service has imposed restrictions on how much you can pay off without having to have the customer report and so on.

But, I think if there were problems within the state of New Jersey or in the state of Nevada or any other state that has gaming, why it should be handled on the state level, and the federal government should keep its hands off completely because, in effect, all they would be doing is killing the goose that laid the golden egg. Nevada pays quite a bit of income taxes to the federal government. Of course, what Nevada pays in taxes to the federal government as opposed to all the rest (the taxes the federal government collects from other states) is very, very small. However, as I’ve said before, if they tax gaming out of existence, Nevada wouldn’t exist; the federal government would have to subsidize it. So, you know they talk about the federal government stepping in all the time, well, what are they stepping into? Of course, they’d have one helluva fight in Washington from everybody in the state of Nevada and probably from the people in New Jersey. And right now after Proposition 13 [Jarvis-Gann amendment in California] I don’t think they’d be in very good position to impose any undue restrictions on the gaming industry or anything else in the country right now, because the people have really had a bellyful

of it, and it’s going to wind up in Washington. The tax revolt is going to just keep on going until it gets to Washington. And I think that Washington’s already gotten the message, even our President. The least amount of federal intervention you get in anything, the better off you are. Next question.

Is the state tax structure fair?

No, I don’t think so. As a matter of fact I was talking to some of our would-be candidates for governor not too long ago. Number one, they tax you on your gross business, so I have months in the wintertime where I lose money, and yet I have to pay five and a quarter percent to the state for the gross business that I do. The tax structure is based on your gross income—that is before any expenses are taken out, just completely what you win or lose. So if you have a game that wins a hundred dollars, five and one quarter dollars goes to the state. Now if it cost me a hundred and twenty dollars to operate that game, then I have lost twenty-five and one quarter dollars because it cost me a hundred and twenty to operate it; I’ve made a hundred dollars, but five of that goes to the state, you see.

So, they haven’t taken into account that—and I’m not singling out Harrah’s, don’t misunderstand me—but they haven’t taken into account that I’m in the same tax structure as Harrah’s is. Now he has a hundred and some odd games, and I have ten games, but it cost me probably more per game to run my business here because of the less volume that I do per game; and yet I have to pay the same amount of gross tax that he does, but it cost me more to operate. See, because he can operate with less floormen; he can operate with less high-priced help and do a bigger volume than I can, but still I’m taxed at the

same rate. And, I really don't think it's fair, no. But I've argued the point with our politicians several times and—.

Now as far as the way of doing business, why everybody does business the same way, and according to the rules and regulations; I have no quarrel with that. But I do have a quarrel with the tax structure because the cost of operating this place as opposed to—just because I'm one-tenth the size of Harrah's doesn't mean that I can—and I use them; it could be Del Webb or it could be any of the larger places— my cost of operating this place percentage-wise is quite a bit greater, but the state doesn't take that into account, and they could care less. The Gaming Commission— well, our legislature makes these laws, and they have not given any relief whatsoever to the smaller operator, no. And I disagree with it wholeheartedly.

How do you think it should be altered then?

How do I think it should be altered? It should be prorated to what the place is capable of doing, as opposed to its expenses, to do that type of business. And then I'll say Harrah's, Del Webb or one of the bigger places, pays five and a quarter percent; a place of this size should be prorated down to four percent or something like that, something that we can live with and still make a reasonable profit.

Last year my total taxes were six hundred, and I'm getting my financial statement this coming week for our fiscal year; but according to the income tax statement, the taxes that went to the state out of this place were six hundred and some odd thousand dollars. That's quite a bit more than I make personally, *quite* a bit. And, say five times more than I make—no, six times more than I make—that goes to the state. And then I have my other expenses along with everything else; so you

see, it takes quite a bit of money just to keep the doors open in one of these places. You take a place like MGM, I just have to guess that their expenses are somewhere around two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a day just to keep the doors open. That's their expenses. So, it's not that easy a business, really.

And of course, this is just the gross tax. Of course, then we have table taxes, and then we have county and state taxes on slot machines, and then we have city taxes on our games and slot machines. So you see, when you see—of course, I've gone through this before—but when you see in the newspapers that the gamblers made so many millions of dollars over a quarter and business is up ten percent or twenty percent. What they don't realize is that the inflation that other people have to deal with hits us also in higher wages and so on and so forth. And this is one industry where you don't change your percentages. The percentage on our games is the same as it was forty years ago, so the only way that you can do any better with your business is to try to increase the volume. And in trying to increase the volume, that means more giveaways and so on and so forth. So even though the returns on the gross are greater—because this is all the newspapers come out with, is what the gaming industry paid on the gross, but they never come out and say that it cost them X number of dollars to operate their business and what their net profit was, if any, you see. There's a *lot* of difference there, but you'll never see one newspaper come out in an affirmative article and say, well, the gaming industry business was up ten percent over this quarter and they paid so much in taxes, but it cost them X number of dollars. And all this information's available right at the state level, that it cost them X number of dollars to be able to increase their business ten percent. Harrah's, if you read the paper here not too

long ago, their first quarter of 1978 was down in profit even though their gross was up—cost of doing business. So, that's about it on taxes.

How would you deal with allegations of skimming?

Well, you haven't heard of any lately. You see, the state of Nevada changed their laws, and insofar as the count itself is concerned—and like ourselves here, I can tell you how we do it. We count all three shifts every twenty-four hours. As a matter of fact, if you'd like to watch sometime, you're more than welcome to come up. The state requires you to count at a certain time every day. And, the key that opens the boxes is put in a safe deposit box. It has two keys—I or my partner each have one key; the cashier's cage has the other key. It's signed in and out once a day, and that's when the count—. Now the head cashier has to come up to the counting room with me; we both put our key in this safety deposit box, and then we can open it to get out the key that opens the boxes.

Then when I count, they have a regulation whereby only one partner that has a five percent vested interest or over, can be in the count; and then you must have a verifier from the cashier's cage, or I may take a man from the slot machine department or my restaurant manager or even a dealer. When I say even a dealer I'm not saying this in a derogatory sense, but I may take a dealer off the table and bring him up and count the money. I personally never touch the money, unless it's to verify the hundred dollar bills. In other words they'll count them down, and then I will re-verify that that's the amount of bills that's there. Other than that all I do is put down figures on the sheet and watch. All these other people—it could be anybody in the count—can come in there, and handle the money. And all I do is

watch, and then I put the figures down that they give me. And that's the way a count is done, so consequently I would have to—and the key that's in there, in the lock box, one lock shop has the combination of that key, and they are honor bound not to make another key for this count room unless they notify the Gaming Commission.

So consequently there's one key for the boxes that open the games. And this is the way that the Gaming Commission wants it done. And, in other words, like my partner and myself, we both own twenty percent. Well, the two of us cannot be in that count room at the same time—only one—and all the rest are people who have no vested interest in the place. So therefore, it would be very foolish for me to take four other people and say, "Now let's skim." Of course number one, they would want a cut of it, and number two, you may have to fire that person sometime. And then they in turn would go and say, "Well, he made me do it, and I want to confess to everything now," and so on and so forth. So you see, you don't leave yourself open to anything like that.

So, and again, it's like I said, square gambling is the strongest thing in the world; and if you can't make a living at it, a legitimate living at it, well, then you don't belong in the business. Like I said, years ago when things were tough, why you had to take, what we call, take an edge here and there to be able to exist; but these are things of the past. And many years ago I suppose it was skimming going on. In all my experience in the gaming business, I was never a part of anything like that, never had to be, simple as that. Probably people did, probably people were caught at it, but we're audited just about every three years from the gaming Commission and then the Internal Revenue and so on and so forth. And I've been in this business for a long, long time. So, that's about all I can tell you about it.

Oh, one other thing, the slot machines—the slot machine money, I don't even go watch it being counted; that comes from my slot machine department heads. They count all the money; they count it when it comes in out of the buckets. They do what they call a first count, and then they go in through the wrapping machines. I don't even see that money. The only time I see the money is when it comes up and they show me the sheets and I look at the percentages. Keno is the same way. Of course, the Keno, we have an auditing on it because we can audit the tickets that come in and the payouts and so on and so forth, so no problem.

So, in conclusion insofar as that is concerned, we got a pretty tight ship. We may be getting robbed on the slot machines from possibly the outside people. You know there's always these cheaters that come and find a way to beat a machine. There's an interesting case of skimming from Stardust not long ago that was discovered the Gaming Commission. I think if you read the paper, he was just indicted not too long ago, but he had a very ingenious method. They used a weighing machine, and his method was that he fixed this electronic weighing machine so that it would weigh two quarters for every three quarters that was in there on the machine. So consequently when they got through and everything, why then for every two quarters there was one went in his pocket, and he infiltrated it through the change booths and so on and so forth and then walked out with the cash. They figured over a period of years—why he got away with untold millions of dollars, they don't know for sure.

How was he discovered?

I don't know. I don't really know. I don't recall what it was. I think that somebody had

to say something, probably somebody that was disgruntled and didn't feel they were getting their fair share or something. Goes back to what I told you just before, you just can't leave yourself open to anything nefarious like that, just no way in the world you can do it. Besides, if you did, what are you going to do with the money? Can't go buy anything with it; you have to be able to show everything you got. The federal government can come in and net worth you anytime they want. And if what you've got supersedes what your income has been, why, then you're going to be pretty hard put to tell them where you got it, right? So, just isn't worth it. Simple as that. Next question.

The Kefauver hearings took place in 1951 and the Gaming Control Board was created in 1955. Is there any relation between these two events?

Oh, no, no, no—no, the Gaming Control Board was created—well, when I came back from the service in 1946 [and] when I got into Shorty's Club in Sparks, I had to apply for a license through—you're right. It was under the Tax Commission at that time, but you had to apply for a license from the Tax Commission, which before that (I think it was 1943) all you applied to was the county, and the state. You'd go up and pay your license and that was it, period. You were in business; you didn't have to go through an investigation or anything else. But you're right, it was the Tax Commission and then the Gaming Control Board was created, and then the Gaming Commission.

I don't know [if there was a relation]. The reason I don't know is because I wasn't active in management of gaming at the time. I was working in those years as a "21" dealer at the El Rancho, as a matter of fact, and I can't rightly say one way or the other. But whether that had any bearing on it, it probably did. I

would have to assume that it did. And again, my contention would be that as long as this investigation was going on and so on and so forth—and I guess it went on nationwide. I mean Nevada wasn't singled out; I mean it was nationwide as far as gaming was concerned. And in order for Nevada to whitewash itself, more or less, they created these agencies to say, "Well here, we're taking care of our own state." I would have to assume that this—I can't say for sure, but Nevada really didn't wind up with any real bad reputation out of the Kefauver investigation as opposed to the rest of the country, how bad the rest of the country was.

But, as I say, I would have to assume that was something on the order of after Watergate, why everybody started putting on these—oh, what was it, all politicians show their net worth and this and that and the other thing; and they all want to be shining white knights, you know, shining armor on the white horse and all that. And they started all of these little things going on to try to make themselves lily white; financial disclosures is what it was. And, you know, every time something happens, everybody jumps on the bandwagon, and then all of a sudden it dies out. You don't hear any more about financial disclosures, this, that, or the other thing any more. All these politicians run scared, and they all jump on the bandwagon and start passing laws against themselves and this, that, and the other thing; and then now they have to live with all these things. Sometimes it becomes a little difficult—to wit, Washington, the Korean scandal, so on and so forth.

So—but I would imagine it had some effect on the creation of these agencies, yes. I have to assume that it did. I wasn't that interested in politics and so on. At that time I was kind of interested in—just after the war—interested in making a living for my

wife and family, so I didn't—maybe I should have been a little more interested in what was going on, but I was a younger person at the time. I don't know, we sort of treated it as kind of a joke—that was it; I mean the Kefauver investigation and all that kind of thing. I mean these people, they don't impress me, really; [I'm] kind of an individualist, as it were, and these people don't impress me one bit. You know, like their junkets here, there and the other place, and again Kennedy and Tunney coming over here to find out about the Indians and their water. What ever came of that? You wonder sometimes how gullible the public really is of these idiots. Maybe I'm disrespectful, but after seeing the way they waste money in government and so on and so forth, I just—kind of turns me off. Of course I don't imagine I'm the only person in the United States that's being turned off right now, not with what's going on in the country. And they have all these investigations and so on, and yet crime per se is running rampant in the United States, and the legal system is allowing criminals to run loose all over the country—murderers.

Listen to Paul Harvey sometime—find out. I was listening to him the other day, and this guy went into the courthouse to be arraigned for rape, and he had a woman that he had raped previously in the trunk of his car and hauling her all around the city. And they had turned him loose on that particular charge, and he had done it again, and he was going in to be arraigned for it; and he had the woman that he had raped previously and was turned loose on, in the trunk of his car. And she finally was killed; he finally killed her. So, when you see things like that, and what the judicial system allows any more, why you begin to wonder. Of course, I'm not knocking the government insofar as the government itself. It's the people that are interpreting the

laws now and what they're doing with them. Our system is probably not the most perfect system in the world, but it's the best there is, in the world. I just can't get overly enthused about our people in Washington because they're human beings just like the rest of us, and they're subject to the frailties of human beings. They're not gods, even though they would like to be thought of as gods. Next question.

What is your opinion of the quality of state control of gaming?

Well, again, other than the interpretation of the regulations by the people that are out in the field, like I said, I don't run my business any different than I did thirty years ago. And with their book full of regulations, they still haven't changed. In other words they're forcing people to operate their business in a proper manner, which is good. I find no quarrel with the Gaming Commission and their rules and regulations. There's some—oh, you know the little idiosyncrasies of people that interpret—just like OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] comes around and inspects your building. Well, you might have two different inspectors, and they'll see three or four different things in a different light completely. Or you can have an Internal Revenue agent come in and audit your books. I've had a difference of opinion between two of them as to how they interpret the regulations. So you're subject to human frailties, as it were. But it doesn't bother me too much—I mean insofar as what their rules and regulations are. We can abide by them, but sometimes I fall into a trap because the people that work for me ignore them.

And I had a problem here one time; they came in with a— wasn't a surprise raid, as it were, but they came in and checked all the

work cards of all the people to see if they had their police cards. And a lot of people didn't have them. Of course I had instituted a rule that nobody gets their check, their paycheck, until they show their police card at the cashier's cage. Well, they checked a couple of people, and they didn't have their police cards, so I got a letter from the Gaming Commission stating that I was in error. I didn't even know about it. My cashiers weren't following through my orders, so then at that time I had to get up and start raising a little hell. And then I found some people that were working for me that couldn't get a police card, but they were friends of a cashier who's no longer here. And I had to assume that everybody showed their—you know, got their police card when they came to work. Some of my shift bosses should have checked this out; but I wrote and explained to the enforcement division what happened and they were very nice about it, and we got the whole thing cleared up very nicely. And I have to say one thing about them, they're very cooperative—very cooperative. And they realize that, you know, you can't be here twenty-four hours a day. And they write you a letter, and they expect you to correct it and rightly so. So I corrected it, and that's been the end of it. They came back, I think, oh, maybe two or three weeks later and did the same thing all over again and found everything—except for one person and that person had a police card, but just didn't bring it to work with him that night. So, I got back to them and explained what happened and that was the end of it. As a matter of fact, I have the letter from the enforcement division right up there on my podium in the middle of the pit—let people know. Of course, the cashiers know now, too, they must show their police card when they come to get their paycheck. So I know that everybody—at least I know this—that everybody that works for me has a

police card. And the other thing is that they've all been told that they should have them on their person when they come to work here. So consequently if they don't have, then they're remiss, not me, of course I can't run a police card check every time somebody comes—you know—every shift. But you remind them once in a while. So now once in a while I pull my own little surprise raids, but other than that, I have no problems with the regulations that they have. I don't think anybody else does either. I mean I don't know of any other regulations that they could impose really—everything's fine—I can live with it, other than I think the taxes should be adjusted.

Now we come down to something else [laughing], and again I'm very radical on this. Observation on the industry associations, the Nevada Resort Association and Gaming Industry Association. Its purpose is good, and that is to effectively lobby for the good of the gaming industry, in the state of Nevada with the government of the state of Nevada and with the federal government. And yet I don't belong to it. Its origin is exactly as I stated for the good of the gaming industry in the state of Nevada.

When did it start?

I don't know exactly. I'd say—I don't really know, I wouldn't venture to say, five, six years ago, something like that—may have been earlier. I don't know exactly when it did start, but—. As I say, the origin of it was the people in the city of Reno got together and decided that they should have an organization, and the purpose was to more or less to protect it against any unfair laws that might be put on by the federal government or the state government, and to be able to have representation in any laws that might be passed and so on and so forth.

And as I say, the origin, the purpose was very good, and its effectiveness—I have mixed emotions about it. It has been effective in some instances and others it has not. I think it's been more effective in the state than it has federal, although they were able to go back to Washington several times and argue things on Keno and so on and so forth. Of course, by the same token, other members of the industry didn't allow just the gaming industry or the association itself to go back there. I mean each person went back on their own, from the different clubs and so on to Washington [D.C.]. And I wonder sometimes as to the effect of one or two people representing a group before say, the state legislature or the IRS or something else, as opposed to numbers of people showing up. I wonder which is psychologically more effective.

However, it has been effective in some instances. And the reason that I didn't join—when they started this association, a group of them got together and formulated the association; and after it was all put together and so on, then they came and asked me to join. And, being, you might say, an “elder” in the gaming industry in the state of Nevada, why I said, “Well, where was I when you formulated this association?”

And they said, “Well, when we got together and did this thing, it was very hush-hush and secret.”

And I said, “Well, then evidently you didn't trust me.” So I said, “If you didn't trust me then, I don't want you to trust me now, so I'm not going to join your organization.” And I haven't to this day. I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself.

So, I don't know why it was so hush-hush and secret and so forth, but I guess the people that formulated it or started it got together and decided what they were going to do and how they were going to do it; and they come to

whoever they wanted to and said, "Well, this is how much you're going to pay to belong to our organization," and so on and so forth. If I wasn't there on its inception, why I didn't want to be there after it was formulated. That's the reason I don't belong to it to this day.

So, I go along—I mean I don't do anything any different than they do or anything. And as a matter of tact, some certain things have come up, I've found out about before they did or something; why I always call them and let them know, and have good rapport with them and so on. But insofar as I just—I feel that I deserve every right that can be bestowed upon me from the gaming industry in the state of Nevada because if it wasn't for my father and myself on through, why they probably wouldn't be where they are today. And maybe I'm wrong in my feelings (I don't know), but that's the way I feel about it, and that's the way it's going to be. So—.

Les Kofoed, in his oral history, remarked that Warren Nelson was responsible for your decision not to join the Gaming Industry Association.

Warren turned me against the Gaming Commission?

The industry association.

No, no. Definitely not. Warren had nothing to do with it. As I told you before, I'm an individualist, I'm my own man, and the reason that I turned myself against it—and I think I told you why a little while back through our interview—definitely not. Les Kofoed is completely wrong. And he had no reason to make that statement, and I'll tell it to him to his face because I turned myself against it because if they didn't trust me when they were organizing it, I don't want them to trust me afterwards.

If you recall, they organized it, everything else, and then they came around and said, "Well, it's going to cost you so much to join," and so on and so forth.

I said, "Well, where was I when you were organizing this?"

And they said, "Well—" it was—as a matter of fact, Rome Andreotti, the casino manager at Harrah's, came over to ask me to join. And I told him that I wouldn't, and he said, "Why?"

So I told him, said, "You people didn't consult me when you were organizing this thing." I said, "Maybe I'm small potatoes as far as you're concerned, but I'm still in business and I've been here—I was here long time before you ever were." Or any of 'em for that matter.

So Rome said, "Well, it's hush-hush; it was a hush-hush deal," he says, "until we got it all arranged."

I said, "Well, then evidently you didn't trust me."

"Oh, no, it's not that."

I said, "Well, how else can you put it? If it was so hush-hush, you certainly couldn't trust me to keep a secret, is that correct?"

He says, "It wasn't that way at all." He said, "Maybe we didn't do it right."

I said, "You certainly didn't." And I said, "If you didn't trust me then, I certainly don't want you to trust me now, so I'm not joining, period." Simple as that. In other words, if you're going to start an organization, let's do it aboveboard.

Plus the fact that I wonder—I have mixed emotions about what they could do for me, as opposed to me going along with them for everything that they wanted to do. I'm sure that if I went and asked them for a favor of some kind, that the whole industry would say, "No, we're getting along all right the way we are and you stay the way you are," you see.

That was going to be my next question. Is there anything that an association like that could do for you as an owner?

No, not that I know of. They claim that they have a representative in Washington to watch out for any federal legislation that goes on, so on and so forth. I still feel that one man representing a group in Washington—the only thing Washington understands is numbers, so if they want to get something on, better all descend on them like locusts. This they understand, but when you have one man representing you with the federal government especially, why he doesn't carry as much weight as a bunch of people. As if you run your business properly, you run a legitimate business, what can they do for you? I mean, we're not out to try to fight anybody. The rules and regulations of the Gaming Commission or the Gaming Control Board—if there's something, they have public hearings—well, anybody can go up there and state their case, so actually what can they do for me?

I've given you a summary, I think, of the history of gambling in Nevada, pretty much; I think probably more than anybody else has. But, in conclusion, I think that gaming—gaming laws, the legalization of gaming in the state of Nevada—has been a boon to the state. Nevada is not dependent solely upon gaming. It's a beautiful state; I love it, and I feel privileged to have been a part of the gaming industry in the state of Nevada from the time I graduated from high school until the present time, and I intend to continue on in gaming. Of course, I say there's farming in the state of Nevada; the railroads have contributed their share of the taxes. Gaming, I think, at the present time has kept Nevada as tax-free as any state could be over a period of years because of the taxes they've imposed on it. And I think it will continue to keep Nevada

a very healthy state financially, and I think that gaming, no matter what happens in the rest of the United States—they have a long, long way to go before they can ever catch up to gaming such as it is in the state of Nevada today, and controlled and conducted as it is in the United States or rather in this area. And I think it's going to take a long, long time, like New Jersey—or even if California were to pass gaming laws, then it's going to take a long, long time before they can ever begin to come close to what Nevada has done.

Of course, Nevada has evolved from the time, 1931, when they first legalized gaming to the present time; and it's gotten to the point now, I think, where their laws are adequate for any longer, greater period of time. There's not an awful lot more that they can do. They've touched about every facet of it, and it's very well supervised by the state. As a matter of fact, some areas it's overly supervised. I mean it's, you might say, a law of diminishing returns insofar as what they try to do, you know, in their enforcement and so on and so forth. There's been instances of where I think the state has carried it just a little bit too far, but these things all get ironed out.

Carried too far how?

Well, of course in the courts, the courts agreed with the establishment, like that Sahara case when people from the Gaming Control Board went in there and wanted to go into their counting room, and the cashier let them in, and the cashier called up one of the executives, and he told him, "Well, get them out of there until I can get down," because he didn't know who or what they were.

And evidently they didn't show their badges or anything else to any—I guess they did to the cashier, probably scared him to death or something. And then when

they threw them out, they decided they were going to fine the Sahara twenty-five thousand dollars for throwing them out of their counting room. Well, I don't think they did the proper thing; they should have gone in there and announced themselves, asked to see one of their executives, and then say, "We want to go into your counting room." And I'm sure that they would have been let in with no problems. But, I wouldn't want one of my cashiers to let anybody—I don't care if it's the FBI or President Carter—into any part of my establishment that I had under lock and key unless they called me first, because I'm the president of this place, and it's my establishment. If they have a warrant that they think something nefarious is going on, they still would have to get me to let them in there. I don't care. I mean we have certain rights that should be adhered to. And the Supreme Court agreed with that theory.

So, but it's just things like that, you know, it's— sometimes you let people have a little authority and they usurp it. I don't like that. And I think they got their comeuppance on something like that. But there's a lot of little things like that, you know, that go on. Like they come in and count your slot machines and so on, and I mean it's ridiculous to think, for instance, that an establishment like this would have any more slot machines than they are licensed for. I mean we're not idiots. And yet they come in, and here's a guy going around with a thing and he takes one of my people, takes time. When they come in here I just tell them, "Go on and count the slot machines, but leave my people alone. Let them do their work." I don't want to be bothered because as a matter of tact, I tell them, "When you get through counting slot machines, you'll see that I've been licensed for maybe five or six more slot machines than you're going to count in here." And I

always keep it that way. That way I can move slot machines in and out the way I want it, but never would I be stupid enough to have more slot machines in this establishment than I'm licensed for. It's little things like that, you know, that are childish, really childish.

Do you deal with the federal investigators in the same manner?

No. No, of course, now you see they get their count from the state. But no, I've never had a federal investigator come in and count slot machines.

Do the federal investigators come in, or is it just state?

No, no it's state. No, the only thing we have to do with the federal people is they come in and we get audited about once every three years or so from the IRS, but outside of that we're not bothered with the federal. That's why I say I have mixed emotions about just how the federal government feels about us. They don't seem to—other than little different deals they want to put on Keno and things like that, and you know the slot machines; you've read about it in the paper where they want to tax people. Well, first they wanted to withhold taxes and so on and so forth, and then they decided they couldn't do that, wouldn't do it. So, of course this is one thing that the Gaming Association did; they went back to Washington and kind of put a stop to it. I don't know for how long—we don't know—but they have.

Well, like I say, the history of gaming in Nevada has been good; it's evolved from a very, very small thing into something that has been good for the state, and I say I'm very happy to have been a part of it and a part of its history, as it were. And I think it's

good for the state; I don't think it would be good for any state or any area, community that had large industry. I think I stated that before because the two are not compatible. Either you have a resort town, or you have a manufacturing town or large industry town, but the two don't go together. That's one of the things that happened back East when they used to have closed establishments, and the people would gamble, and they'd lose their money, and they couldn't feed their families. Then gaming becomes a curse, just as alcohol does. But if you keep it in a resort community and so on, why then there's no—I don't think that it would ever pose any problem.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, AWARDS, OTHER INTERESTS

Well, actually during my early years of life there weren't the community activities that we have today. So, consequently, [I] belonged at one time to the Elks Club and the Footprinters, which is an organization to create a better understanding between the police—or law enforcement—and the citizens. And that was about the extent of—they didn't have commissions for various things in my earlier years in Reno, and while I was in Las Vegas, of course I was working pretty hard most of the time, didn't have much time to devote to community.

However, the community was good to me, and in time I became affiliated with the Variety Club in Las Vegas which— it's a very active organization in Las Vegas. They don't have one in Reno. And they help retarded children, and [it's] very, very interesting. I became pretty much involved in it in Vegas. And we used to have parties for them and well, we just augmented what other societies were doing down there for these children. It was very rewarding to see these children grow up, and some of them spastic children

and—brilliant kids, but just—they had these afflictions. And some of them grew up to be—found their place in the community and were able to function as normal human beings. And I watched this as they went along, so it was very rewarding to be a part of that.

And then after that I came back to Reno, and I was asked to join the Prospectors' Club, which is a very highly thought-of organization in the town. Plus I've belonged to the Elks now for thirty-three years. I joined the lodge here in the late thirties. And then from there evolved becoming one of the trustees of the [Reno] Air Race committee, which I'm serving my last year now. You serve a term of six years.

And I was asked to go on the Airport Advisory Board, which I'm still a member. And at the present time I'm wearing two hats: I belong to the Airport Advisory Commission, and in the event that the Airport Authority should be declared constitutional, why then I will be a member of the Airport Authority. And I am the only member from the Airport Advisory Commission that was asked to serve

on the Airport Authority, which is a feather in my hat. I must have done a good job, or they wouldn't have asked me.

And awards—from the Army I have the Bronze Star for Heroic Achievement. Oh, I also belong to the Optimist Club, which is very active in helping youth. We have several goings-on during each year to promote youth, and they have an oratorical contest. And then we have our money-making projects which is a “Hole-in-One” at the county golf course, and we have the parking lot at the Air Races, and this brings in quite a bit of revenue for us. And we're able to help children along sending them to summer camps, and we have a scholarship for a young man that's going to George Washington University School of Law. And, his name is Mark Zeller, incidentally. And, oh these things, when you begin to see the results of efforts, it's very rewarding.

And, I don't hunt or fish—not that I'm against it—or I don't golf. But I think that everyone should have their own hobbies and do what they enjoy. So my hobby is flying, and I try to do as much flying as I possibly can and economically in the time available.

And, let's see—other interests—I used to be and still am a car buff. I own a very old car, not a very old car, but it's a one of a kind. It's a 1937 Cord sedan, and it happens to be one of the last hundred built. During the time that Mr. Cord built his automobiles (and the last one he built was 1937), all his automobiles had a hundred and twenty-five-inch wheel base. And the last hundred that he built—it was during the depression of course, and in order to try to spur sales, why he lengthened the car by seven inches. He only built one hundred of these, and I happen to have one of them. Bill Harrah doesn't have one in his collection. And, I'm in the process of restoring that now.

And, I do aerobatics, or air acrobatics, whichever you might want to call it, and either

term is okay. And outside of that, I do my work, and I go home in the evening and stay with—my family, of course, now is all grown up, and so the wife and I have our home, and the kids come around and visit with us. We enjoy our life very much. We do go to parties and so on and so forth during the year, go to many community activities. And I happen to be Catholic, and I contribute to the church. Oh, I'm also on the Advisory Council for the priests' pension plan. I was asked to serve on that by the bishop—financial advisor, as it were.

And, the other interests that I do have—of course it's a task, but it's rewarding, and that is my jogging. And jogging has evolved to running. I started out jogging, and now I'm running eight and a half-minute miles. And as you know I'm sixty years old, and on my sixtieth birthday I made it a point to run six miles, one mile for every ten years of my life, and finished out beautifully.

So, by the time all of that is taken care of and my meetings—oh, I'm also on the Railroad Ad Hoc Committee which is in process of trying to do something with the railroad tracks running through the center of the town. We're doing a study now and trying to formulate a solution to alleviate the traffic problems created by the trains, and of course, we're going to have more trains going through when they start carrying all this coal through here. And it does create a traffic problem; it creates a pollution problem—all these cars backed up and idling there and just pouring out carbon monoxide and all the other pollutants that come from the exhaust of cars—and also a waste of fuel because the cars don't turn their engines off; they just sit there and idle. So you can imagine the waste of fuel going on during that time. So, we hopefully expect to get that resolved within the next few years.

What are your options?

Oh, there are several options. Everybody talks about depressing the tracks. Now this creates many mechanical problems and grade problems insofar as the railroad's concerned. If the tracks were fully depressed, they would have to start in Sparks and probably emerge at Mogul, out here, because of the grade—for the train to be able to pull its cars up a grade, you'd have to make that grade—I forget what the percentage of grade is that the railroad can live with. But otherwise than that, if you just dropped it down and then come right back up again, the trains'll never be able to come up. So you have to make it a gradual grade to come back up.

The other option is to relocate the tracks someplace else in town, which would be an enormous cost. And of course, this is all subject to the approval of Southern Pacific because they own this land. And if they move or did anything, it would be just for public relations with the community, because they don't *have* to do anything.

The other options are underpasses or overpasses, but then that would infringe upon the property such as mine here that abuts the tracks; and if you have a depression coming through there, then you wouldn't have the pedestrian traffic or you wouldn't have the automobile traffic. And if you put overpasses, then it would have to start back probably on Second Street and a gradual ramp on up, which would create a terrible looking thing in town. And the other alternative is to elevate the tracks, but there again you have a grade problem because of the train running across all this steel going through town, such as the elevateds in New York and Chicago and so on.

And then I personally offered a solution which raised some eyebrows, but looks to me like possibly the logical solution. And many,

many years ago, when I was just a young fellow here in town, the Center Street, for instance, dead ended right here at Commercial Row. Now the solution I offered was that: let them dead-end the streets at Commercial Row; relocate the depot, Southern Pacific Depot, and what is their old freight station now, on the other side of the tracks; and make Commercial Row a four-lane expressway or freeway, whatever you might want to call it. Really it wouldn't be; it'd just be a four-lane street going through town. And as the people came here, up Center Street or Virginia Street, they could turn right or left onto this (with traffic lights, of course)—right or left onto this expressway or freeway; and then let them go to either Wells Avenue and go over the overpass or underpass or make a new street right down here at Evans Avenue, which doesn't go through anyhow, and let them go underneath the tracks and they could do the same thing up here at Arlington. That would alleviate the traffic in downtown Reno because you'd have very little traffic going east and west except for the traffic that wanted to go down to the underpass at Evans, for instance, and also the underpass at Arlington. And this would keep traffic flowing evenly and the trains could go through here all day, and it wouldn't bother anybody at all. But, they looked at me kind of funny about that because I don't know whether it's too logical a solution or not, because also many years ago, I wondered why—as long as they dug that big pit up there and depressed the freeway through Reno, so that the tourists that come through Reno don't emerge from that until they get to Sparks—why didn't they dig it a little wider and relocate the tracks alongside of it. Would have been the logical solution for the whole thing. But, that's too easy when you come to government. The idiots don't think right, but that would have been the logical

solution at that time, when that was done—is to bring the railroad right alongside of it, and with their off ramps, or for that matter, right down the middle of it. The railroad could have gone right down the middle; then you have your traffic flowing east and their off ramps, and then everything else going over across bridges on top. And it also would have served as a divider for the freeway. But, again, that would have been too easy. And this was all done with federal money, as we all know. So, that takes care of that. Now we still have the problem.

Do you think there's any real chance of getting something new out of it?

Well, they've been trying to do it since 1930, so I doubt that it'll ever be done in my lifetime. But it's really an effort, a futile effort, having the studies and everything else done, because when it comes down to the bottom line—and that's money—and you go to the public to float bonds or something like that, well, you saw what happened to the sewer bond the first time around. They voted no. Now we got an airport problem, and there are some die-hards here in Reno that just don't want to see the town grow, and they can't stop it. They're not going to stop the growth, but they can prolong it a little bit, so that it just keeps harassing people. It's not stopping the growth, but it's compounding the problems because the growth is here already, but the problems are not resolved. Sewer, railroad, traffic, anything—you name it, we've got it. And it will probably be resolved in time. So that's about all my other interests that I can think of right now.

Oh yes, I belong to the Wolf Pack Booster Club, and we have our luncheons up here for the football luncheons. And we have a critique of the game before; that's up in the

Fireside Room upstairs. And we also have the basketball luncheons here. And during the year—I don't say this to be blowing my own horn, because I don't believe in that—but during the year, with football players that have scholarships and have no means of support other than their scholarship, I usually feed a couple of them during their season, and basketball players also and some track runners.

So I have a good rapport with all the people up at the University. I know most of them, and, as a matter of fact I was very, very sorry to see the president of the University, Max Milam, go because he was a very good friend of mine. And I thought he was doing a good job, and I think it was more of a political situation than anything. And you know when you're the president of an organization, if you have your hands tied all the time and you have to go either begging or asking somebody if you can do something, well, then you don't serve your purpose. And what they fired Max over, because he took the bull by the horns and did what he thought was the right thing, I thought it was a very poor excuse for firing him. I thought they should have had something much more *definitive* than what they fired him for. But, however, he is gone, and I think it was a great loss to the University, as far as I'm concerned.

But, oh, I was also named as an honorary alumni of the University. I didn't go to the University, as I stated previously, but I received an honorary alumni award for my work and efforts at the University. And I was also made an honorary colonel in the military department for my work and contributions to the military department.

And let's see, what else. Oh, I'm also an aviation safety advisor, hold meetings with fliers and discuss and talk about safety and flying. We have a slogan, "A Safe Flight Is

No Accident.” It has an ambiguous meaning; a safe flight is not having an accident, plus the fact that a safe flight is not an accident because it was preplanned, so—. And [I’m] very well thought of by the Federal Aviation Administration here in the community, and I have good rapport with them. And sometimes when they have contests for the best mechanic of the year or the best instructor of the year, why I’m asked to serve on that committee also for the selection. And let’s see what else. I don’t know where I find the time to do all this, but I do [chuckling].

But, I do—I enjoy my life. I’ve never actually looked at age, years of age, as a criterion of a person’s mental or physical age because I feel that I belie my age and that I’m as active as I am mentally and physically. It was brought home to me rather vividly one day not too long ago, however, when I flew down to Los Angeles to see the King Tut exhibit, and in so doing—there were two couples, myself and my wife and another fellow and his wife, went down there. We went on a tour of the Queen Mary, so when my friend went up to buy the tickets, the young lady behind the ticket booth said, “Are there any people here over fifty-five?”

I said, “Oh yes.” I said, “I’m sixty.”

And she says, “Oh,” she says, “Well, you’re a senior citizen; you get in for two dollars less.

Well, needless to say, I was the brunt of the jokes for the rest of the day, and it just sort of struck me, as I’d never considered myself as a senior citizen before. I just never had—well, I don’t associate with senior citizens. My group that I associate with is usually ten to fifteen years younger than I am. And I hope I can continue to do it because if you can equate with these people or have the rapport with them that you should have, why then you’ll go a long ways towards not getting old and staying on the down side of old age. And

I sincerely believe that this is right, and of course, if you keep the cardiovascular system going real good, why you don’t age as fast. So, I guess that just about sums up my other interests, unless there are any questions you have on that.

You, like your father, have many charitable activities that aren’t made public, don’t you?

Well, true, but I mean I believe in the old adage that as the Good Book says, if you’re going to spread your alms, don’t sound a trumpet before you, because then you’ve defeated what you’re doing. I don’t ask for praise or for recognition for things like that because if you don’t do them from the heart, it you go out there and do these things because you want people to recognize you and say, “What a hell of a nice guy you are,” and all this kind of stuff, and “Look what he’s doing for this,” and “Look what he’s doing for that,” then it’s defeated its purpose. And it’s very easy—I could—you see a lot of people get on the bandwagon; they get write-ups in the paper and this and that and the other thing about all the things they did and so on. I just don’t believe in that because if that’s what you’re doing it for, why, forget it.

So I don’t know, maybe I’m wrong, but I don’t ask people to—sure my dad years ago—every Thanksgiving and every Christmas, whether business was good or not, they always had a meal ticket for everybody that didn’t have a meal. I think I told you about this. And he saw that anybody that was hungry, ate on those days. Of course, he couldn’t do it every day—I mean it would be a physical impossibility. So, but these things—you don’t go out and say, “Hey, look what I did today!” Big deal. How many people are there that do these things that you never hear of, and you know your reward comes not so much from

recognition, but the rewards you get from it is seeing the results of your efforts. If you have a student that comes in here and eats, and he does good in school or he does good in track or whatever his ambitions are, that's reward enough; and you don't have to go out and say, "Hey, look what I did for this guy." Actually, I'm not doing a thing for them; I'm just seeing that a fellow human being gets along in this world. And people have been good to me throughout my life, so as they say, one hand washes the other. I go home and go to bed at night, and I say, "Good." That's reward enough. But the real reward is in seeing that you have helped a human being along the way, and by the same token, you see the success that he is having possibly by the small effort that you put out. I mean part of it comes from the small—it's up to the human beings themselves what they do with themselves. But by the same token, if these people were here on scholarships and they couldn't eat, why then they're not going to be here. They'd be home; they'd be someplace where they could eat, or somebody else would do what I'm doing. And it's a reward in itself. Maybe I'll get my reward in heaven. Maybe they'll recognize the fact that maybe along the way during my lifetime, along with all the bad things that I've done, maybe there's some good come out of me, you know. We're not all perfect, even though we like to think that we are. But, that's all I can say about it. You don't have to go out and, as I say, sound your trumpet before you.

What is the function of the Airport Advisory Commission?

The function of that is to—there are many things that come up at the airport that the City Council does not feel that they have the time or the expertise to decide upon. So, they

picked these members and amongst them—businessmen, people who fly, and different vocations—and we meet once a month. And the airport manager has several items on the agenda that have to be resolved, such as the airport master plan; studies that are being done by the federal government or the city, leases at the airport, here and Stead also. And they meet on the third Thursday of every month and have an agenda we go by. And airport management spells it out, exactly what it is, and recommends approval or denial—of course, this is the airport manager. Then we study it, discuss it, at the meeting—it's an open meeting; the press is there all the time. And as a matter of fact, you can see in the paper just yesterday, where the parking rates are going to change at the airport. And that was brought before us. And we're strictly a recommending body. If we feel that an item is worthy of recommendation, whether airport management recommends approval or denial, we make up our own mind, and then we recommend, or recommend denial to the city as to that particular subject. And then the city can take any action it wants, and this is what will be opposed to the Airport Authority. The Airport Authority will be absolute; in other words, we will make the decisions and that's it, period. We will tell the airport manager what to do, when to do it and how to do, and where to do it. And we don't have to go and recommend to anybody—we make decisions and the decisions are carried out. We would run the airport, in other words. The only thing we would have to do under the Airport Authority is if we were out to get bonds, like revenue bonds or general obligation bonds, why then we would have to go to the county commission or possibly the council of Governments, which would include the city of Reno, Sparks, and the county, and then they would decide whether the project

was worthy of going out and issuing these bonds or not. In other words, when they say absolute authority, it would be absolute up to a point. But when you start to spend a great amount of money for some project, why then it would have to have the approval of the county commissioners and the city and so on.

And what's happening now is with the Airport Authority as opposed to the Airport Advisory Commission—the city now owns and operates the airport. And with the Airport Authority, then as I say, there are four members from the city of Reno, two from the county, and one from the city of Sparks— and the whole area would be there to dictate as to what happens to the airport. In other words, they would run the airport, as opposed to the city. They wouldn't have an advisory commission any more because we would be it, period.

Are the members appointed?

Yes. There's four members appointed from the city and two from the county and one from the city of Sparks. So, but really the city of Reno, in effect, would be running the airport because if the four members got together, they could override the votes of the other three. Not that—of the people that they have on the Airport Authority now, they've been appointed and taken their oath of office; I see no conflict at all.

Who is that?

Well, let's see, I'm trying to think—from the city of Reno there's myself, George Hutchins, Bob Shields, and George Aker. And from the county is Don Carano and Betty Morris. And from the city of Sparks, Jerry Higgins. Now, George Hutchins has—do you want their occupations, or is it necessary?

Well, you know what I do, and George Hutchins has Petroleum Engineering here in town. They deal in compressors, pumps, and all kinds of hydraulic equipment, so on and so forth. And Bob Shields has one of these companies that make air conditioning ducts and so on and so forth— sheet metal. And George Aker is the president of Nevada National Bank. And then Don Carano is a local attorney and also one of the owners of the Eldorado Hotel. And Betty Morris is a schoolteacher, and Jerry Higgins is an executive of the Nugget in Sparks. So you have a pretty good cross section of people. George Hutchins is a flier; I'm a flier; Bob Shields is a flier. I don't know whether Don Carano flies his own airplane or not. But we have an attorney, two people from the gambling business; we have a schoolteacher, president of a bank, and George Hutchins in an engineering firm. So we have a pretty good cross section of people that are pretty knowledgeable in business and the flying end of it and what it all takes. So that about sums up what I can think of community activities, awards, and other interests.

Oh, I received a lifetime membership to the Optimist Club for my varied activities in there. But there are many, many awards that are presented, all in plaques and so on and so forth. One of these days I'll get my room built in the house and I'm going to hang them all up, and I'll let you go down and take a picture of it [chuckling]. And I guess that just about sums that up.

Would you like to comment on the recent newspaper article concerning a secret meeting at the Palace Club between MGM executives and the Reno City Council?

Okay. I made the *Washington Post*, the *Miami Herald*, the whole thing on that. As I

stated before, Al Benedict and myself opened the Stardust Hotel, and Al's been a good friend of mine over the years. When MGM came up here, Al and Fred Benninger came up here and they were looking over some sites to build their hotel. And they came up and had lunch with me—they're both very good friends of mine—and they told me about this site they had out here on Hash Lane. And at that time—I probably have some real estate people very angry with me, I don't know—but I told them that that was not the site for them, and they wanted to know why. They said it was a beautiful traffic count.

And I said, "Yes, this is very true," I said, but the traffic count that you're seeing are people going back and forth to work to Carson City in state government." I said, "Now you build a big hotel out there," I said, "have you looked to see the arterials that could handle the traffic that will come to you?" I said, "The ring road is years away, the north-south freeway is years away, so consequently you're going to be out there in left field trying to get down Virginia Street." I said, "Now you show me how you're going to be able to handle all that traffic or how it's going to happen.

So they said, "Well, what do you suggest?"

I said, "Well, the bulk of your traffic comes over Interstate 80, but Harrah's picked up the Welch ranch and part of the Costa property, and then there was some Besso property up there that he picked up. He's got quite a bit of acreage up there. Well, there was sixty acres of Costa property that was east of Harrah's, between the cemetery and what Harrah has. So anyway, after we found out that Harrah had picked up this property, why, they said, "Well, what about this Costa property?"

Well, Costa himself was in the hospital and expected to die any moment, couldn't conduct any business. They knew it was going to go into an estate, so MGM put a bid in for

the property, which was fine. It was handled through First National Bank. And so then they said, "What other property is available here?"

And just out of a—something hit me, and I saw this big gravel pit down here, and the reason it hit me was because it was seventeen acres for sale to the west side of the freeway. And I used to go back and forth to the airport on Mill Street to fly my airplane, and I looked at this stuff many, many times, and thought, "What a beautiful site this would be for a hotel," because of the fact that it was seven-tenths of a mile from a four-way interchange, 395 north and south and I-80 east and west. So I said, "This would be the spot to build your (also four minutes from the airport) hotel, if this land is available."

So they said, "Would you find out if the land is available for sale?" That's the hundred acres on the east side of the freeway where MGM now stands.

I said, "Certainly will." So I did find out, and it was for sale at a price.

Anyway, at that time MGM had three sites picked out to come into Reno, so Al Benedict called me and said, "Sil," he says, "we don't know yet where we want to go or what, but would you be so kind as to ask the city council if they would attend a luncheon, not a meeting, a *luncheon* so that we can meet with them and know who we are dealing with and that we have plans to come to Reno."

I said, "Fine." So I called Bruno Menicucci, as a matter of fact, and I asked him, I said, "Bruno, is it possible to get these guys together?"

And he said, "Sure, why not?"

So, no inkling that it would ever, you know, cause the big furor that it did. So we arranged it then. The board of directors, Mr. Kerkorian, Al Benedict, Fred Benninger, and all the other board of directors; Cary

Grant, Board of Directors of MGM, arrived. Everybody saw them walk into the place. I took Pat O'Driscoll through the place, and I said, "Now Pat, you're in here now." I said, "Do you know that there's probably ten people in this place now that know you're standing there talking to me." And I said, "You think something is secret around here." So I said, "As a matter of fact—" So anyway we went on up there, and city council came in; they all introduce each other and so on. And we had two or three people come up from downstairs with a pad to get an autograph from Cary Grant, which he was kind enough to autograph for people; and this was a secret meeting, according to the newspapers and the grand jury or—. You know I almost got called to the grand jury over this thing, until I explained to the attorney general's office just exactly what happened, as I'm explaining it now.

At that time MGM had no inkling of where they were going to build their hotel, no inkling whatsoever. So, the meeting was over; they all shook hands good-bye and so on and so forth. It was at a later date that MGM decided that the—well, they had Harrah outbid them on the Costa property, which was sixty acres up here, by ten percent, so they said the heck with it because sixty acres really wasn't enough land for them anyway. The Hash Lane property—they took my advice and decided that wasn't the place to go. So they finally settled on that area there.

Then they made the deal of the land exchange for the old abandoned sewer plant for some land that they bought from Marv Byars, and the city's going to make a park out of it and so on and so forth, and there wound up being two appraisals on it. And then when MGM was presented with a bill for the second appraisal, they refused to pay it, and that's what opened up the whole shebosh.

And that's how the big supposedly "secret" meeting was a luncheon for the city council and the board of directors of MGM to meet and get to know each other, so that when they came up here, they would know with whom they were dealing. And it was not a secret meeting; there was nothing secret about it at all, and, as I say, the public knew that everybody was up there. You can't keep a secret down here in anyplace in this town, as you know, so consequently there was no secret meeting whatsoever. And from the reports that I get, the *Washington Post* and the *Miami Herald* and all, they all had the same script exactly by somebody else's byline, and it means really nothing. As a matter of fact, I could sue these people for misrepresentation of what actually happened. Does that answer your question?

Yes, thank you.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

So, marriage and family life—. Well, as I told you before, my dad and mother came over from the old country, and they had four children—two sisters and one brother. The two sisters are older, and then I'm the third one, and my brother's the younger one; and we all grew up here in Reno. My oldest sister was born in Redding, California; all the rest were born here in Reno. We grew up here, and as I say, the house we live in, we moved into when I was three years old—that's fifty-seven years ago. And my mother still lives there. And we all married. The only two members of the family that had any children were myself and my brother. We each have two children. I have a son and a daughter, and my brother has a son and a daughter also. Of course, they're all grown now, and out on their own. And of course, as I told you before, family life in the twenties and early thirties was rather subdued. We didn't have television; we didn't have radio hardly—I mean I saw all of those things born, as it were.

And family life was a more closely knit life than it is today. Children and parents

were much closer than they are—it was, oh, I don't know as you'd call it much stricter, but we communicated much better than children and parents do today. Today every body has their own thing, as it were, that they want to do, and they can't be bothered with the others. You raise a child to, oh, you might say thirteen or fourteen, and then pretty soon that child is more or less on its own because the parents have other activities. There's so many more extracurricular activities *now* than there were in those days.

In those days we used to have family picnics, and I say family picnics—many families would get together and go up, we'll say, to Incline Village or something, which was a day's outing, and have a big picnic. And all the women would make sandwiches and salads, and away we'd go. And everybody stayed up there for the day, and everybody'd come home. And people used to go and visit with each other various times. And you always had some coffee and cookies or something at the house, and the kids would play together. And everybody knew everybody, and now

that type of life is gone. I have mixed emotions about whether it was a better life or not. Maybe that's a sign of old age, but you kind of like to look back and think that it might have been a little better.

But, the advent of television and even with radio, people stopped communicating with each other—had to watch the “boob tube” or listen to the radio, even back to the “Amos ‘n Andy” days and “The Shadow” and all those kind of programs. You wonder sometimes whether it's good or not. I make it a practice, myself—I only watch television for one hour a day, and that's at ten o'clock at night—I watch one of my favorite programs and then I watch the news and go to bed. And other than that I don't watch television at all. I think it's a waste of time; you could get glued to it and never accomplish anything. And that's I guess to each his own.

And, of course, I married a girl—we were both pretty young when we got married. I was nineteen at the time, and I had just graduated from high school two years before. And we had a good life together for many years, and my wife and I had two children. And she died in 1959, July 1959. And about a year and four months later, I remarried and wasn't married quite three years—I was married on October second—and my wife died in September of that year, September thirteenth. So we weren't quite married three years. And then I was single for quite a while. She died in 1963, and I came to Reno in '64. So, I was single when I came back to Reno. And both of my wives are up here in the Catholic Mausoleum. Of course at that time after two tragedies like that in such a short period of time, I was rather depressed to say the least. I don't know whether I'd call it morbid or not, but I also bought my own little place up there in the Mausoleum, and it's still there, right in between my two wives. So, it's funny, and yet

at the time it was a very tragic thing. And I just thought it'd be a good idea to have it, so I bought it. And at least I have a place to go when I die. But, then I remarried my present wife, Helen, in 1965.

Well, John and Sylvia [my son and daughter] were both born here in Reno, and of course, they had most of their schooling in Las Vegas. And they graduated from Las Vegas High School, and John, of course, went to Rensselaer University. (I'll go through John's career first, and then we'll start with Sylvia.) But he went to Rensselaer University in Troy, New York, and he got his degree in chemistry. And then from there he came back—during the summer he worked at Basic Magnesium in Henderson, Nevada in their chemistry department.

And then after he graduated, why he came West to the University of Nevada and got a scholarship. He came here and taught chemistry and was able to study for his master's degree. And then from there, he got his master's degree at the University of Nevada, and then he got a fellowship at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington and was studying for his doctorate in chemistry. And during that time or while he was here at the University of Nevada, his mother died—my first wife.

About a year and a half later I remarried, and during our honeymoon, why we paid a visit to John at the University of Washington in Seattle—spent the day with him up there, and of course, myself, I've always been interested in medicine. And we were walking all over the campus, so I had John show me the medical school at the university.

And so I told him at the time, I said, “You know, John, with the schooling you've had so far, if you would be interested in continuing on and going to medical school, I'd see you through.”

So he said, "Well," he said, "I'll give it some thought."

And oh, it was about three or four weeks later, he had already applied to McGill University in Canada, at UCLA and Stanford. And he was accepted at all three, so he chose to go to Stanford. Well, he called me and told me that he had decided to accept my offer. And then he decided to go to Stanford because it was closer to Reno, and he knew I was moving back up here, and also, I have a brother who lives in Los Altos, so he was close to family.

And he was accepted at Stanford, and he went on and worked in their medical department while he was going to school. In other words, I didn't help him completely; he more or less pulled himself up by his own bootstraps. I paid his tuition and some of his living expenses, but he also worked while he was going to medical school. And he worked with a Dr. Kornberg down there who was studying with DNA, which is the stuff of life and genetics and so on and so forth—far beyond my comprehension. But he graduated from Stanford Medical School, and then did his internship in Buffalo, New York at Children's Hospital.

And after he did his internship, why he decided to go with the National Institutes of Health and go into research. And he's been in that ever since, and of course, he went with the (it's more or less—they're separate departments, but they're all in one) Food and Drug Administration, which he received an honor from them for his work in testing drugs and so on, so forth to make sure that they weren't harmful to people. Of course, this requires a lot of scientific work and testing and research.

And the last time he was here, he had decided to stay in government work; but he's now thinking of making a move to a medical

school, and I think he's already done it and teaching anatomy at this school, but still being able to do his genetic research with this medical school. I think it's a government medical school if I'm not mistaken, but I don't know the name of it.

Oh, he did also get a fellowship to the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and he studied there for almost a year. And then he's been sent to Switzerland several times, five or six times, by the government on lectures and so on, and he's been to Russia. He's going to Russia again this fall to lecture, and he's been to India. He's practically been all over the world except for the Far East, and sent there by the federal government, of course, for—not exchange student, but exchange professors to lecture on things that they've had.

And he's getting along very well. He has his own home in Washington, D.C., and he has a private practice, about two hundred patients; he's doing all that, too. Sometimes wonder where he gets the time, but he enjoys his work; he likes Washington—for the life of me I don't know why, but he does. And of course, naturally, any father would like to have him here and practicing his medicine here, but he feels that his calling is research and that's where he wants to be, so far be it from me to decide his life for him. And I'm very proud of him; he's done a beautiful job and made me very proud, and neither one of my two children have ever given me one iota of trouble in any way, shape, or form. They never fooled around with drugs or anything that would have them be in trouble with the law or anything else. I'm just a fortunate parent, really. And so much for John.

Sylvia, of course, as I say was born here in Reno also, and she grew up in Las Vegas and she went to UCLA for two years and decided to—call it drop out or end her college career. Of course, girls are—sometimes they're

education minded and sometimes they're not, and of course Sylvia was not. So she came back to Las Vegas, and she worked there for the publisher of a magazine. And, then when I remarried she moved back to Reno and worked at the Overland Hotel as a clerk in the hotel and learned all their machines and so forth that they use to—of course they're outdated now, but at that time they were the ultimate in hotel registering and, you know, bookwork and so on and so forth. And, then she went from there to the Nugget in Sparks and worked in the cashier's cage at the Nugget in Sparks. And then she subsequently married a fellow by the name of Ole Severson, who two years [ago] in October died of a heart attack; and she had become a homemaker, and I have a little granddaughter who is nine years old now.

And, then after Ole died, Sylvia didn't do too much of anything for some time. And then when MGM built here, why she got in touch with Mr. Benedict, the president of MGM in Las Vegas, and was able to obtain the lease on the dress shop and the fur shop in the new MGM Hotel here in Reno. And she's now running that. And of course I see her almost daily. She's doing very good, so I kind of feel that familywise, I've accomplished my goal in life. Of course, another fortunate thing was that both of my children were well grown when their mother died, so I didn't have the problem of raising two infants. John, of course, was gone from home by that time, and Sylvia was with me for quite some time and then went out on her own.

But as I say, I never had any problem with either child; and I think their upbringing, the home life that we had, although I wasn't that much of a part of it because I was working most of the time—most of my work was at night— but their mother did a beautiful job of raising them, and I'm very proud of both

of my children, really. I think that my goal in life has been accomplished, and at the present time they're both secure and I feel that now I can sort of relax and take life easy a little bit without having to worry about what might be happening to my children and so on. And it's a kind of a nice feeling; it's a relaxing feeling. And I will be able to go on my vacations when I want to and so on, without having to worry about what's happening to my children. And my goal in life has been accomplished more or less, insofar as the family is concerned. So that about ends my two children.

Of course, we have two others—my present wife had two children by a former marriage, and I've raised both of them. And the boy is—well, again, here's a case of—some people are college material and others are not, and the boy—I sent him to school, and he went to college for two years, and he and college didn't click for some reason or other. It's not that he's not smart, but he just didn't like it, period. So he's now working for the Coca-Cola Company, and his sister is going to the University of Nevada. This last year she had a 3.2 average I think or something, which is very good, and I believe that she will probably get into the Orvis School of Nursing. She took her first two years of college for pre-nursing. So, we're rather confident that she will get in the Orvis School of Nursing, and of course, when she graduates from that, well, then she will have her career set out for her. I tease her a lot of times and tell her, "As long as you're that interested in it, why don't you just go on through to medicine and go to medical school, get into medical school and go on through and become a doctor," because there are more and more women doctors graduating now than ever before and very competent ones. But she said no, she would rather just stay with the nursing, so that's what it'll be.

That's one thing about me, I've never tried to run a younger person's life. They may do things I don't like, but it's their own—whatever happens to them, they have to feel that they've made their own destiny or made their own way in life because if you force them to do something that they didn't want to do, then whatever happens it's your fault. So, as long as they don't get in trouble or do anything, I've never tried to force my wishes on them. So it's your bed, you make it, you lie in it; if you get in trouble I'm always there to help you, if you need the help. You can always come to me. I can offer you my advice; you can take it or leave it. But—and this is not being cruel—this is only being logical because I'm not going to be here for the rest of their lives, and it has to come—the time when they have to make their own decisions, so you might as well start them out making their decisions while you're still alive. And possibly if they do go the wrong way, you can help them. And if they don't, so much the better; then you've succeeded. And I feel that I've succeeded with all of them. So it's a real good feeling.

We were a very close-knit family, and we're all in business here together. I said my brother owns part of the business, but he's got his own business down in California, so he has really nothing to do with the management of the business and so on.

We all more or less think the same. Well, not exactly like me. I think I'm kind of a throw-off from—they're, say, more conservative thinking than I am. I wouldn't say that they're as progressive as I am. I don't think they have the ambitions that I have, but oh, you might say that—oh, you could call me my dad reincarnated, as it were. And I'm the only one that is really, you might say, the spitting image of him, in looks as well as thoughts, words, and deeds. And the rest of them tend to be a little more conservative and

satisfied with—not so much their lot in life; they made their own lot in life, but there're none of them hurting in any way, shape, or form (I mean financially or physically), but they more or less feel that they're satisfied with what they've done. Myself, I don't think I'll ever be satisfied with anything; I just want to keep going and going and going and going. Of course that's what I feel made the United States at one time; it's still being made—it's being made into a bigger country and a better country by just the fact that people do want to improve and progress. And, you know, if you stand still, you go backwards because everything goes on around you; so you can't stand still. You've either got to increase your knowledge or you have to increase your endeavor in life or whatever you do; you just have to keep going and forging ahead because if you don't you're going to get swallowed up. If the lamb doesn't run away from the lion, all he has to do is walk up and eat it. And that's what can happen to people who just decide that they're satisfied with what they've got in life and they're not going to do anything to improve it—not so much their life but their endeavors in life.

But we have our arguments, which is normal in any family, but there's no big arguments; and we all come out liking each other, not hating each other. And there's no, shall we say, sibling rivalry insofar as the family's concerned. Nobody was ever jealous of anybody. We were all treated the same, and we all—if one's got a little bit more money than the other, why nobody cares. And if one of the members of the family is in trouble or anything—which luckily none of them have ever been in any serious trouble of any kind, either financially or morally or physically—why we all go to their aid. And in other words, we'll fight amongst each other, but don't let anybody else have to stick their nose

in. It's kind of like that, and it's worked out real good for us because we're all very—very close—everybody, except my brother who lives in Los Altos, and that's only two hundred and fifty miles away. Well, we all live here in Reno and we see each other practically daily, and no problems. And like I say, if anybody has any trouble or whether it be something in the house or whatever, nobody hesitates to call and say, "Hey, I need some help." And the help is there.

As a matter of fact, when I lost my parrot, my oldest sister had her husband go out and tromp around the hills up there and all over looking for that parrot. So you see, there's a definite feeling for each other. It's not like families who go off on their own tangents, and even though they live in the same town, they never see each other for a year or two. And I've seen this happen; it's sad, it's really sad to see things like that. And we're kind of proud of the fact that even though we do have—we may disagree on many things, but when the final round comes, each one is there to help the other. And it works out, really does.

Life experiences—I've told you about all the life experiences that I've had previous to it, so I don't think that I can add anything on it. And I've gone through a little dissertation here on my other observations insofar as life is concerned and what my ambitions are. And again I have to go back and quote what I told you earlier in our interview, and that was, I firmly and strongly believe in Thoreau and his one statement, and that is: "If I knew I were going to die tomorrow, I would plant a tree today, not so much in memory of myself because probably nobody would ever know who planted the tree, but then the fact that I had planted something and it was going to grow, even past my existence here on this earth." And that is the way it should be; I think everybody should feel that way.

Of course, I'm trying to play God now, but if everybody felt that way, it would leave something to posterity, whether they were recognized or not. And again, I don't care whether I'm ever recognized; it's just the fact that I want to—and I'm progressive in my mind and, as you know, physically, and someplace along the line it pays off, really does.

I study, of course, especially flying, all the different innovations that come in the world of flying. And it has become very sophisticated and is something that you must self-educate yourself, because if a new product comes on the market, so on and so forth, they don't have a school for you to go to learn how to use it—you learn how to use it yourself. If you want it, you read on it; you read all about it; you read how it functions and everything. And then when you can afford to buy it and you put it in your airplane, then you learn how to use it. And that's the only place you're going to learn how to use it. And hopefully it will serve in good stead sometime or other during your career of flying. And I sincerely hope that I will be able to fly—be able to pass the physical examinations to be able to fly, if God's willing that I live that long, into my eighties. And I see no reason now why I shouldn't. So as long as I can keep mentally alert and be physically able, why I'm going to do it. And an example, Bill Lear. He died of leukemia at seventy-five years of age, but he still flew his own airplane. Oh, you bet he did. And there's a person to be admired. I mean I've admired many of the things that he did in his life, but I do admire what is progressiveness in the field of aviation, which was his field. But he also went off on tangents and developed the car radio, the eight-track stereo, and all these kinds of things. And here's a man that had a project on the drawing boards when he died and asked his people that worked for

him to finish it, not because he wanted to be remembered as Bill Lear, the inventor of this or that or the other thing, but he knew that he had a good product and that it would serve in good stead for the public later on, and he asked them to finish it.

So, of course I've gone into the summary and conclusions and my philosophy of life. And, my plans for the future: plans for the future are to keep progressing, to try to live a life where I will harm—of course I'm going to philosophy now—where I will harm nobody and nobody will harm me, and that I can continue to progress in business, and keep building, and watch the community of Reno, of which I was born and raised here, and it is my town. If everybody thought of the place they live in as theirs, well, then they would probably try to take better care of it. Rather than you say, "I live in this town," say, "No, this is my town. I belong here; it belongs to me. The community belongs to me and I belong to the community. So consequently what can I do to improve this community; what can I do to help it along?"

No matter what your endeavor in life is insofar as business and so on, possibly if you have a business establishment such as mine, keep it as clean as possible, keep it palatable to the public, so that they want to come into your establishment. And in wanting to come into your establishment, they can spend their time here and go out with a good taste in their mouth, as opposed to going out and saying, "Oh, I'll never go into that place again," and so on and so forth. If you're going to put food out, put good food out. If you can't do it, then close your restaurant. If you're in the gambling business, you deal your games as honestly as possible, and you treat the public as nice as you can, and you will flourish and continue to grow.

And, my future in this life is possibly, God willing and financially, to make this

place grow and possibly add hotel rooms to it, in time. I have another piece of property over on Sierra Street which'd be in between the Circus Circus and the Del Webb place. I don't have the property—but my mother owns the property—but I say, if I were able to take that property and develop that. So I have—when you say plans for the future, I'll probably make old [Lincoln] Fitzgerald look like a piker before I'm through, because I will continue to build and do everything that I possibly can to make Reno a bigger and better town.

And financially, again I have to reiterate, it's not for the financial gain, although I don't want to lose any money on any of my endeavors. But a person can only wear one pair of shoes; they can only wear one suit; they can only fly one airplane. So to amass millions or billions, as it were, other than what it can buy for your personal pleasure and security during your lifetime, why anything else is superfluous. What are you going to do with it? People become—they amass too big a fortune for some reason or other; psychologically they become hoarders of money, and they don't spend it. They don't do anything to enhance the community like oh, let's say—say I had a hundred million dollars. Well, what would preclude me from going to the University and saying, "All right, here's twenty million dollars. Now let's build a nice football stadium, cover it up or do something with it, so that you can have your football games in the (I've thought about this) wintertime and have the spectators comfortable, instead of being out there in the cold wind and so on and so forth." Or contribute something—of course many people do; there are many philanthropists that are big money people that contribute to medical schools and so on and so forth.

But if I got to the point of where I had this kind of money, this is what I would do, because once I saw that (charity, of course,

begins at home) what I wanted to do for my family was taken care of and so on and so forth—and then any surplus would go to charities. But the charities that I would pick out—not something that would be administered by somebody else. In other words, if I had millions and I wanted to put a million dollars into that University, I would go up and say, “Here is a million dollars, but this is where it’s going to go and where it’s going to be spent, and it’s not going to be spent on a bunch of administration. It’s going to be spent exactly here. Now get your contractors and your architects or anything else, but I want to see to it that this money is spent exactly for the purpose I want it to go for.”

Of course a medical school or something like that, you would have to go through and spend through a board of trustees and so on and so forth. But you could still, to a certain extent, dictate to the board of trustees, the departments that you’d want it to go to and so on. And that’s what my plans for the future are. I don’t know how many years I’ve got to go yet, and you know when you get to be sixty years of age, you say, “Well, what do I have? Do I have ten years, do I have twenty years, or do I have five years?” You don’t know. But as long as I’m alive, why these are my ambitions to keep going ahead, forging ahead, and doing everything that I possibly can to improve anything that I have anything to do with. That includes my flying.

And if I can help somebody along the way—you become cynical after a while because when you do help people, sometimes they take advantage, and sometimes you incur some substantial losses in trying to help people. And this has happened to me many times, and it’s usually a little different outlook—well, it makes you a little more cautious and wary of who you help and why. But, you know, everybody has their illustrious

dream that they want to do things, but nobody has any money. And of course, they come to a person like myself and say, “Look, this is what I’ve got;” and so on and so forth, “you be my partner and everything, and I have so much collateral that in the event that something happens, you won’t lose any money, but I need the money right now.” And you start feeling sorry for people and you fall into a trap. Then when the time comes if their illustrious dream *doesn’t* come true, the money is spent, and all of a sudden the collateral is gone too, so who winds up paying? The lender, the bank, or whatever—they come to the guy that is more capable of paying and say, “Here, you signed this note, so now we want our money.” And this has happened to me many times.

I used to think many years ago that taking them to the bank and putting them on a note or something would offer some form of protection, but it doesn’t offer one thing because the bank always comes back to the cosigner because that’s the only reason the guy got the money to begin with— is because you guaranteed the note. So consequently, I have decided that’s not the way to go.

And from here on out if I feel that somebody has something of merit, well, then they’re going to have to be able to put up their own share of the cash, so that I know that if I lose, they’re going to lose also. But when they lose with my money, and I have to pay it back, why they’ve lost nothing, except their idea. So, I’ve become very wary. And another psychological thing is this: that nobody should ever go into a business they are not well versed in. And that means that you should not buy into a business, a restaurant business, if you’re in the gambling business because you don’t know anything about that. And if you rely on somebody to take care of it for you, pretty soon they don’t. So you don’t let other people handle your money because you—we’ve seen

corporations go broke; we've seen people lose in the stock market except, of course, for your blue chip stocks and so on and so forth—big companies such as AT&T, General Electric, Westinghouse and those companies like that. But look at your railroads, for instance. Here's big corporations that are losing money day by day, and people have stock in them and they're going to lose their money. So, you just—maybe I've got the wrong idea because many big cities were built and people have made a lot of money on stocks, and if nobody bought stocks, well, then these big corporations wouldn't be able to exist. But, I just like to handle my own money and make sure that I know where it's going and how it's being spent. It's kind of worked out for me in this way.

But letting people handle your business affairs—I mean there're many people like movie actors and so on that have business managers. All of a sudden they wind up finding themselves in a jackpot and wonder how they got there. So like I say, I'll make my own jackpots [laughs], and then it's nobody's fault but my own, just like when my bird flew away the other day, that was my fault strictly. I should have had a string tied around his leg and a string tied to me. But, the old story, you know—ego. You don't think it can happen to you; then all of a sudden it does, and then you wonder, "Where was I when I was supposed to be thinking."

That's about the gist of the whole thing, and that's what I have plans for the future. I fly every chance I get. Anytime that I can go someplace—of course it's getting pretty expensive now, you know. Gasoline now is up over a dollar a gallon for airplane fuel, so—but when you consider that you pay fifty-nine and sixty cents for automobile fuel and the time that's expended going from point A to point B, why the airplane is still a more efficient machine—that is, if time is [important].

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